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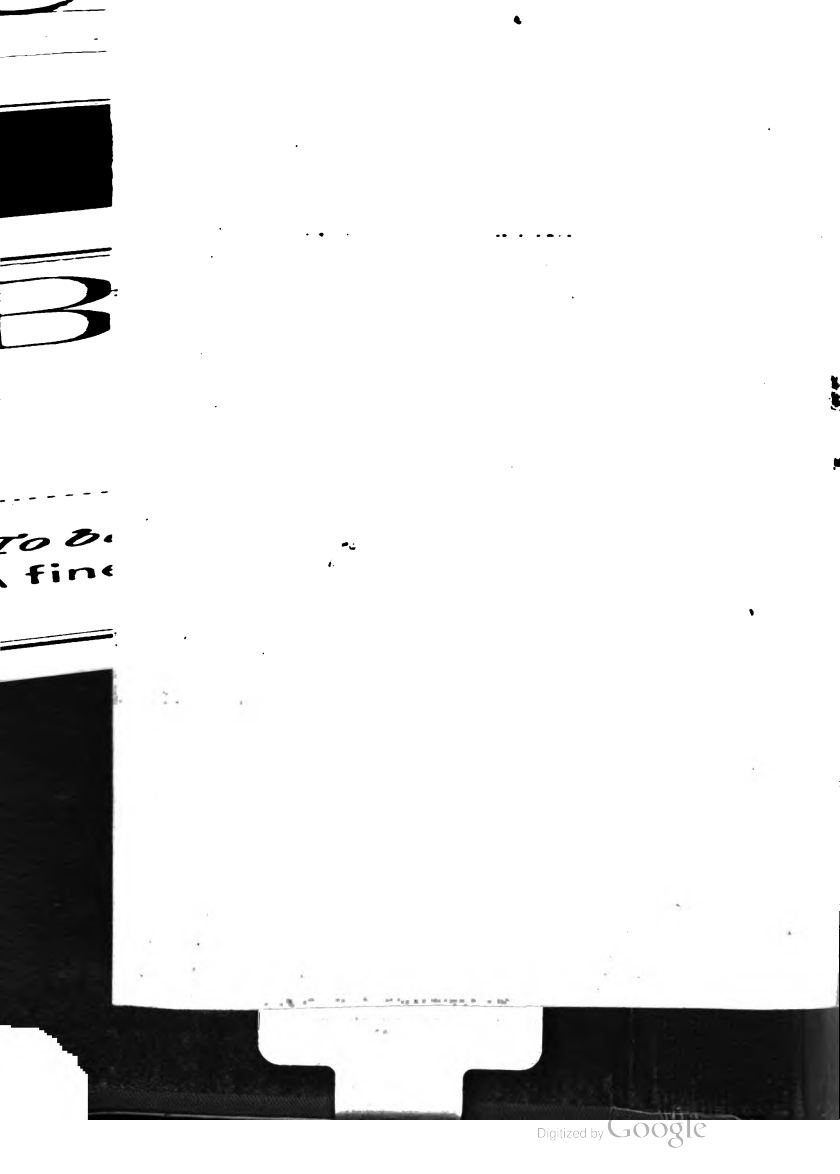

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MARGERY

(GRED)

A TALE OF OLD NUREMBERG

BY

GEORG EBERS
Author of "Serapis," etc.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

CLARA BELL

IN TWO VOLUMES — VOL. II.

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MARGERY.

CHAPTER I.

THE Imperial Diet in Nuremberg! — the Imperial Advent!

The next day their Majesties were to enter into the town, and with them my Hans.

A messenger had brought the tidings, and now we must use all diligence; Ann and Elsa and I, with one and twenty more, had been chosen among all the daughters of the worshipful gentlemen of the council, to go forth to greet the Emperor and Empress with flowers and a discourse. This Ursula was to speak, by reason that she was mistress of all such arts; likewise was she by birth the chiefest of us all, inasmuch as that her late departed mother was daughter to the great Reynmar, lord of Sulzbach. Nor need Ann and I seek far for the flowers. The Hallers' garden had not its like in all Nuremberg, and my dear parents-in-law had promised that we should pluck all we needed for our posies.

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Or ever I mounted my horse, I had tidings that Herdegen and Junker Henning had, last evening, come to bitter strife, nay, well-nigh to bloodshed; for that when my brother had sung the ditty in praise of one Elselein and the other had called upon him to put in the name of Ann, Herdegen had cried: "An if you mean red-haired Ann, the tapster wench at the Blue Pike, well and good!" Whereupon the Junker sprang up and flung the tankard he had just emptied at Herdegen's head. Herdegen had nimbly ducked, and had rushed on the drunken fellow sword in hand; but Duke Rumpold had put a word in, and by this morning Junker Henning seemed to have forgotten the matter. In Brandenburg, verily, such frays were common at the drinking-bouts of the lords and gentlemen, and by dawn all offence given over-night in their cups was wiped out of mind.

My brother lodged again at our grand-uncle's, while the Junker dwelt at the Waldstromer's town-house. My Lord Duke found quarters at the Hallerhof, and his Highness the Prince Elector, and Archbishop Conrad of Mainz likewise lodged there, with a great following. Cousin Maud had made ready to welcome the Margrave of Baden and the Count von Henneberg under our roof. The upper floor of the Pernhart's house was given up to his Eminence Cardinal Branda, the most steadfast friend at Rome of Master Ulman's brother the bishop. His Holiness the Pope had sent that right-reverend prelate as his legate to the assembly, and he presently celebrated mass with great

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dignity in the presence of their Majesties and of the assembled lords and princes.

To this day my memory is right good in all ways; and of what followed on these events much is yet as clear and plain in my mind as though I saw and heard it all at this present time; albeit I, an old woman, would fain hide my face in my hands and weep thereat. For, notwithstanding there were certain hours in those days which brought me sweet love-making, and others of sheer mirth and vanity, yet is the spirit of man so tempered that, when great sorrow follows hard on the greatest joy it sufficeth to darken it wholly. And thus we may liken heaviness of heart to the chiming of bells, which hurts the ear if they sound over near, but at a distance make a sweet and devout music. Now, in sooth, inasmuch as I must make record of the deepest woe of my life, the brazen toll is a sad one, and the long-healed wounds ache afresh.

Those two months of the Imperial Diet! They lie behind me like distant hills. I can no more discern them apart, albeit certain landmarks, as it were, stand forth plainly to be seen, like the church-tower, the windmill, and the old oak on the ridge on the horizon.

How the night sped after our return from the forest and the morning next after — the 27th of July in the year of our Lord 1422 — I can no longer call to mind; but I can see myself now as, the afternoon of that day, I set forth with Ann, attired in silk and lace — all white and new from head to foot, as it were for a wedding — to go to the open place between St. James'

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Church and the German House, within the Spital Gate. Whichever way we looked, behold flowers, green garlands, hangings, pennons, and banners; it was as though all the gardens in Franconia had been stripped of their blossoms. Never had such a brave show been seen, and with every breath we drank in the odors of the leaves and flowers which were already withering in the July sunshine. A finer Saint Pantaleon's day I never remember; the very sky seemed to share the city's gladness and was fair to see, in spotless blue. A light wind assuaged the waxing heat, and helped the flags and banners to unfurl: Our fine churches were decked all over and about with garlands, boughs, and banners, and meseemed were like happy brides awaiting their marriage in holiday array. The market-place was a scene of high festival, the beautiful fountain was a mighty bower of flowers, the triumphal arches, methought, were such as the gods of wood and garden might have joined to raise. Every balcony was richly hung, and even the crested gables and the turrets on the roofs displayed some bravery. All, so far as eye could see, was motley-hued and spick and span for brightness. The tiniest pane in the topmost dormer-window glittered without a spot. The poorest were clad in costly finery; the patrician folk were in the dress of knights and nobles; every craftsman was arrayed as though he were a councillor, every squire like his lord. You would have weened that day that there were none but rich folk in Nuremberg. The maidens' pearl chaplets gleamed in the sun, and the

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golden jewels in their fur bonnets; and what did their mothers care for the heat as they went to and fro to display the costly fur turbans which crowned their heads as it were with a glory of fur? How carefully had they dressed the little ones! They were to see the Emperor and Empress with their own eyes, and their Majesties might even, by good hap, see them!

Presently we saw the procession of the guilds with their devices and banners; never had they come forth in such goodly bravery. They were to form in ranks, on each side of the streets and the highway, a long space outside the gate.

At last it was nigh the hour when their Majesties should arrive. We maids had all assembled. Albeit we had agreed all to be clad in white, Ursula had decked her head-gear with Ostrich feathers of rose-pink and sky-blue; right costly plumes they were, but over many. Now would she look into her parchment scroll, and for us she had brief words and few. The nosegay which her servant in scarlet livery bore in his hand was a mighty fine one; and Akusch and a gardener's boy presently came up with the posies culled for Ann and me in the Hallers' garden. We, and many another maid, clasped our hands in sheer delight, but Ursula cast a look on them which might, if it could, have robbed the roses and Eastern lilies of their sweetness.

The Emperor, it was said, would keep to the hour fixed on; then all the bells began to ring. I knew them all well, and one I liked best of all; the *Benedicta* in Saint Sebalds Church, which had been cast

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by old Master Grünewald, Master Pernhart's closest friend. Their brazen voices stirred my soul and heart, and presently the cannon in the citadel and on the walls rattled out a thundering welcome to the Emperor, rending the summer air. My heart beat higher and faster. But suddenly I meseemed that all the bravery of the town and the holiday weed of the folks, the chiming of bells and the roaring of cannon were not meant to do honor to the Emperor, but only to my one true love who was coming in his train.

All my thoughts and hopes were set on him. And when the town-pipers struck up with trumpets and kettledrums, bagpipes and horns, when the far-away muttering and roll of voices swelled to a roaring outcry and an uproarious shout, when from every mouth at every window the cry rose: "They are coming!"—yet did I not gaze at their Majesties, to whom the day and festival belonged, but only sought him who was mine—my own.

There they are! close before us.—The Emperor and his noble wife, Queen Barbara, the still goodly daughter of the great Hungarian Count of Cilly.

Aye! and he looks the man to rule six realms; worthy to stand at the head of the great German nation. He might be known among a thousand for an Emperor, and the son of an Emperor! How straight he sits in his saddle, how youthful yet is the fire in his eye, albeit he has past his fiftieth birthday! High spirit and contentment in his look; and meseems he has forgotten that he ever summoned the Diet to meet at

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Ratisbon and is entering the gates of Nuremberg against his will, by reason that the Electors and German princes have chosen to assemble there. His wife likewise is of noble mien, and she rides a white palfrey which, as she draws rein, strives to turn its pink nostrils to greet the bay horse on which her lord is mounted.

Yet do my eyes not linger long on the lordly pair; they wander down the long train of Knights wherein *he* is coming, though among the last. For a moment they rest on the stalwart forms of the Hungarian nobles, all blazing with jewels even to the harness of the steeds; and glance unheedingly at the Electors and Princes, the Dukes, Counts and Knights — all in velvet and silk, gold and silver; at the purple and scarlet of the prelates; at the solemn black with gold chains of the town councillors; on and beyond all the magnificent train which has come with his Majesty from Hungary or gone forth to meet him.

Hereupon Ursula steps forth to speak the address; but sooner may a man hear a cricket in a thunderstorm than a maid's voice amid that pealing of bells and shouting and cries of welcome. Meseems verily as though the fluttering handkerchiefs, the flying pennons, and the caps waved in the air had found voice; and Ursula turns her head to this side and that as though seeking help.

Emperor Sigismund signs with his hand, and the two heralds who head the train uplift their trumpets with rich embroidered banners. A rattling blast procures silence; in a moment it is as though oil were

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poured on a surging sea. Men and guns are hushed; the only sounds to be heard are the brazen tongue of the bells, the whinnying of a horse, the dull mutter of men's voices in the far-off lanes and alleys, and the clear voice of a young maid.

Ursula made her speech, her voice so loud at the last that it might have seemed that the honeyed verses were words of reproof. The imperial pair gave each other a glance expressing surprise rather than pleasure, and vouchsafed a few words of thanks to the speaker. His Majesty spoke in German; but in his Bohemian home and Hungarian Kingdom he had caught the trick of a sharper accent than ours.

A chamberlain now gave the signal, and we maidens all went forth towards our Sovereign lord and lady. Two and two — Tucher and Schürstab — Groland and Stromer; and the sixth couple were Ann and I — Ann as the daughter of a member of the council — and my godfather it was, besides her sweet face, who had done most to get her chosen.

Noble youths clad as pages in velvet and silks had received the flowers offered by the damsels; but as Ann and I stood forth, the Emperor and Empress looked down on us. I could see that they gazed upon us graciously, and heard them speak together in a language I knew not; and Porro, the King's fool — and I say the King's, inasmuch as it was not till later that Sigismund was crowned Emperor at Rome, and by the same token it was at that time that my Hans' brothers, Paul and Erhart, were dubbed Knights — Porro, who

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rode at his lord's side on a piebald pony spotted black and yellow, cried out: "May we all be turned into drones, Nunkey, if the flowers which have given this town the name of the Bee-garden are not of the same kith and kin as these!"

And he pointed to us; whereupon the King asked him whether he meant the damsels or the posies. But the jester, rolling on his nag after a merry fashion, till the bells in his cap rang again, answered him: "Nay, Nunkey, would you tempt a Christian to walk on the ice? An if I say the damsels, I shall get into trouble by reason of your strict morality; but if I say the posies, I shall peril my poor soul's health by a foul lie."

"Then choose thee another shape," quoth the Queen, "for I fear lest the bees should take thee for a stinging wasp, Porro."

"True, by my troth," said the fool, thinking. "Since Eve fell into sin, women's counsel is often the best. You, Nunkey, shall be turned into a butterfly, and not into a drone, and grace the flowers as you flutter round them."

And he waved his arms as they were wings and rode round about us on his pony with right merry demeanor, like a moth fluttering over us. Ann looked down, reddening for shame, and the blood rose to my cheeks likewise for maiden shyness; nevertheless I heard the King's deep, outlandish tones, and his noble wife's pleasant voice, and they lauded our posies and made enquiry as to our names, and straitly enjoined Ann and me not to fail of appearing at every dance and

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banquet; and I remember that we made answer with seemly modesty till the King's grand-master came up and so ended our discourse.

And I fancy I can see the multitude coming on; the motley hues of velvet and silk, the housings and trappings of the horses, the bright sheen of polished metal, and the sparkle of cut gems dazzle my eyes, I ween, to this day. But on a sudden it all fades into dimness; the cries and voices, the bells, the neighing, the crash and clatter are silent — for he is come. He waves his hand, more goodly, more truly mine and dearer to my heart than ever. But not here do we truly meet again; that joy is to come later in his own garden.

That garden could already tell a tale of two happy human creatures, and of hours of the purest bliss ever vouchsafed to two young hearts; but what thereafter befell I remember as bright, hot, summer days, full of mirth and play-acting, of tourneys and courtly sports, of music and song, dancing and pleasuring. The gracious favor of the King and Queen and the presence of many princes ceased not to grace it, and went to our brain like heady wine. Things that had hitherto seemed impossible now came true. Out of sheer joy in those intoxicating pleasures, and for the sake of the manifold demands that came upon us in these over-busy days, we forgot those nearest and dearest to our hearts. Yet never was I given to self-seeking, neither before nor since that time.

Ann's beguiling of the Junker, the homage paid to

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her by all, even the highest, Herdegen's seething ire, his strivings to win back the favor of the maid he had slighted, his strange and various and high-handed demeanor, his shameless ways with Ursula, to whom he paid great court when my grand-uncle was present, albeit at other times he would cast dark glances at her as if she were a foe — all this glides past me as in a mist, and concerning me but little. Then, in the midst of this turmoil and magnificence, this love-making and royal grace, now and again meseemed I was suddenly alone and forlorn; even at the tourney or dance; nay, even when the King and Queen would vouchsafe to discourse with me, I would be filled with longing for peace and silent hours — notwithstanding that the mighty Sovereign himself took pleasure in questioning me and moving me to those quick replies whereof I never found any lack. Queen Barbara would many a time bid me to her chamber, and keep me with her for hours; sometimes would Ann also be bidden, and she bestowed on us both many costly jewels.

Then, no sooner had we quitted the castle, where their Majesties lodged, than we must think of our own noble guests; for Markgraf Bernhard of Baden, who was quartered on us, would often ask for me, and Cardinal Branda would desire Ann to attend him. The larger half of our days was given to arranging our persons, and while Cousin Maud and Susan would dress me I was already thinking of making ready the weed, the ribbons, and the feathers needed for the next day.

My Hans was now a Knight. The same honor

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was promised to Herdegen — honor on honor, pleasure on pleasure, bravery and display! In the stead of our old sun twenty, meseemed, were blazing in the heavens. Many a time it was as though my breath came so lightly that I could float on air, and then again a nightmare load oppressed me. Even through the night, in my very dreams, the sounds of music and singing ceased not; but when I awoke the question would arise: "To what end is this?"

Hans held the helm, and was ever the same, thoughtful yet truly loving. Also he never forgot to keep a lookout for the surety of the bark, and if the pace seemed too great, or he saw rocks ahead, he did his part and likewise guarded me with faithful care from heedless demeanor or over-weariness. Margery the rash, who was wanted everywhere, and was at all times in the foremost rank, at the behest of the King and Queen, did her devoir in all points and nought befell which could hurt or grieve her — and she knew full well whom she had to thank for that.

Likewise I discerned with joy that my lover kept the Junker's ardors in check, for he would fain have courted Ann as hotly as though he were secure of her love; and Hans called upon my brother Herdegen to quit himself as a man should and make an end of this double game by choosing either Ann or Ursula, once for all.

In the forest Uncle Conrad had bidden this noble company to the Lodge. After the hunt was over we went forth once more to the garden of

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Martin the bee-keeper, by reason that Duke Ernest of Austria, and Count Friedrich of Meissen, and my Lord Bishop of Lausanne, and other of the noble lords, desired to see somewhat of the far-famed bee-keeping huts in our Lorenzer-Wald. My uncle himself led the way, and Herdegen helped him do the honors.

Presently, as he over-hastily opened a hive, some bees stung his hand badly; I ran to him and drew the stings out. Ann was close by me, and Herdegen tried to meet her eyes, and sang in a low voice a verse of a song, which sounded sad indeed and strange, somewhat thus:

"Augustho pirlin pçodyás."

Whereupon Ann asked of him in what tongue he spoke; for it was not known to her. He, however, replied that of a certainty it was known to her, and when she looked at him, doubtful yet, he laughed bitterly and said that he could but be well-content if she had forgotten the sound of those words, inasmuch as to him they were bound up with the first great sorrow he had known.

I saw that she was ill-at-ease; but as she turned away he held her back to put the words into German, saying, in so dull and low a voice that I scarce could hear him, while he stirred up the earth with the point of his sword, purposing to lay some on his swollen hand.

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"A froward bee hath stung my hand;
Mother Earth will heal the smart.
But when I lie beneath the turf,
Say, Will she heal my broken heart?"

Then I saw that Ann turned pale as she said somewhat stiffly: "There are other remedies for you against even the worst!" and he replied: "But yours, Ann, work the best cure."

By this time she was herself again, and answered as though she cared not: "I learnt them from a skilled master. — But in what tongue is your song, Junker Schopper, and who taught you that?"

To which he hastily answered: "A swarthy wench of gipsy race."

And she, taking courage, said: "One peradventure whom you erewhile met in the forest here?"

Herdegen shook his curly head, and his eye flashed lovingly as he spoke: "No, Ann, and by all the Saints it is not so! It was of a gipsy mother that I learnt it; she sang it to a man in despair — in despair for your sake, Ann — in the forest of Fontainebleau."

Whereupon Ann shook her head and strove to speak lightly as she said "Despair! Are you not like the man in the fable, who deemed that he was burnt whereas he had thrust another into the fire? The cap fits, methinks, Junker Schopper."

He replied sadly, and there was true grief in his voice: "Is a hard jest all you have to give me now?" quoth he, "Nay, then, tell me plainly, Ann, if there is no hope for me more."

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"None," said she, firm and hard. But she forthwith added more gently. "None, Herdegen, none at all so long as a single thread remains unbroken which binds you to Ursula."

On this he stepped close up to her and cried in great emotion: "She, she! Aye, she hath indeed cast her devil's tangle of gold about me to ensnare all that is vain and base in me; but she has no more room in my heart than those bees have. And if you — if my good angel will but be mine again I will cry '*apage*' — I tear her toils asunder."

He ceased, for certain ladies and gentlemen came nigh, and foremost of them Ursula; aye, and I can see her now drawing off her glove and stooping to gather up some earth to lay on the burning hand of the man whom in truth she loved, while he strove to forestall her and not to accept such service. That night we stayed at the lodge, and Ursula again had the chamber next to ours; and again I heard her appealing to her Saints, while Ann poured out to me her overflowing heart in a low whisper, and confessed to me, now crying and now laughing, how much she had endured, and how that she was beginning to hope once more.

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CHAPTER II.

Our grand-uncle and guardian, the old knight Im Hoff, had ever, so long as I could remember, demeaned himself as a penitent, spending his nights, and not sleeping much, in a coffin, and giving the lion's share of his great revenues to pious works to open unto himself the gates of Heaven; but what a change was wrought in him by the Emperor's coming! This straight-backed and stiff-necked man, who had never bowed his head save only in church and before the holy images of the saints, learnt now to stoop and bend. His bloodless face, which had long ceased to smile, was now the very home of smiles. His great house was filled, for there lodged Duke Ernst of Austria, the Hungarian Count of Gara — who through his wife was near of kin to the Emperor, and his Majesty's trusty secretary, Kaspar Slick, and all their people. And so soon as either of these came, a gleam as of starlight lighted up his old features, or, if it fell that the sovereign granted to him to attend him, it was broad sunshine that illumined it. And whereas the other gentlemen of the council, hereditary and elected, albeit they were ever ready to shake hands with a common workman, would stand face to face with their

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Majesties or the dukes and notables, upright and duly mindful of their own worth, my guardian would cast off his gravity and dignity both together; and verily we all knew full well to what end. He, who had been defrauded of his life's happiness by a Baron's daughter, yearned to move the King to raise him to the rank of Baron. He loaded the Secretary Slick with gifts and favors, and seeing that his Majesty was graciously pleased to smile on me, his ward, he would be at much pains to flatter me, calling me his "golden hair" or "Blue-eyes;" and enjoin it on me that I should make mention of him to the King as his Majesty's most faithful servant, ever ready for any sacrifice in his service, at the same time he asked with a grin how it would pleasure me to hear Herdegen called by the name and title of Baron von Schopper-Im Hoff?

Our own honest and honorable name I weened was good enough for us three; yet, for my brother's sake and for Ann's, I held my peace, and took occasion while he was in so friendly a mood to urge him to release Herdegen, and grant him to choose another than Ursula. But how wroth he waxed, how hastily he put on the icy, forbidding bearing he was wont to wear, as he rated me for a wilful simpleton who would undo her brother's weal!

It was now St. Susannah's day.* We were bidden to the tourney. Duke Ernest of Austria had challenged Duke Kanthner of Oels in Silesia to meet him in the lists and, besides the glory to be gained, there

*August 11th.

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was a prize of sixty and four gold pieces. Other knights also were to joust in the ring.

Queen Barbara, of her grace, had bidden me attend with her ladies. At the jousting-place I found Ann; her mother had remained at home by reason that the old mother was sick. My faithful Uncle Christian Pfinzing, who played the host to the Emperor and Empress at the Castle as representing the town council, had brought his "dear watchman" hither and placed her in the keeping of certain motherly dames. Presently, seeing a moment when she might speak with me, Ann said in my ear: "I will end this sport, Margery; I can no longer endure it. He hath sworn to renounce all and everything that may keep us apart!" There was no time for more. Each one had to take his seat. As yet their Majesties were not come, and there was time to gaze about.

The lists were in the midst of the market-place. The benches were decked with hangings, the lords and ladies who filled them, the feathers waving, the sparkle of jewels, the glitter of gold and silver, the sheen of silk and velvet, the throng of common folk, head over head in the topmost places, the music and uproar, nay, the very savor of the horses dwell still in my mind; yet far be it from me to write of things well-known to most men.

Then my grand-uncle came forth. He had Ursula on his arm as he walked through the gate-way into the lists and across the sanded ring to his seat on the far side. This was in truth forbidden, but the unabashed

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old man defied the rules, and as for Ursula she was well pleased to be gazed at. The old knight was smiling; how stately was his mien, and how well the silver breast plate beseemed him, with the golden lion rampant of the Im Hoffs! That helmet and breast-plate had been forged for his special use of the finest silver and gold plate, and were better fit to turn the point of my pen-knife than that of sword and lance. Yet many an one admired the stalwart gait of the old man in his heavy harness. Even Tetzel's dull face was less dull than its wont, and Ursula's eyes sparkled as though her knight had carried off the prize.

Presently my grand-uncle saw where I was sitting, and waved and bowed to me as though he had some good tidings to give me. Tetzel did likewise, seeming like the old man's pale and creeping shadow. Ursula's triumphing eyes proclaimed that now she had indeed gained her end; the dullest wit might not miss her meaning. In spite of Ann, Herdegen had pledged his troth to Ursula. The lists and seats, meseemed, whirled round me in a maze, and scarce had they settled down again, as it were, when Cousin Maud sat down heavily in her place, and by her face made me aware that some great thing had befallen; for now and again she drew in her cheeks and pursed her lips as though she would fain blow out a light. When my eyes met hers she privily pointed with her fan to show me Herdegen and Ursula, and shrugged her shoulders so high that her big head with its great feathered turban sank between them. And if there was surging and wrath in her

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breast not less was there in mine. Howbeit I had to put on a guise of content, nay of gladness, for the Royal pair had bidden me to their side and it was my task to explain all they desired to learn.

A sunny blue sky bent over the ground; albeit dark clouds came up from the west, and I found it hard to make fitting answer to their Majesties' questions.

While the horses were pawing and neighing, and the lances rattled on the shields, nay, even when the Dukes of Austria and Schleswig rushed on each other and the Austrian unhorsed his foe, I scarce looked on the jousting-place on which all other eyes were fixed as though held by chains and bonds. Mine were set on the spot where Ursula and Ann were sitting, and with them the young knight from Brandenburg, Sir Apitz of Rochow, and my brother Herdegen. Junker Henning had his part to play in the tournament. To Rochow the tourney was all in all; Herdegen gazed only at Ann. She, to be sure, made no return, but still he would fix his eyes on her and speak with her. Ursula had turned paler, and meseemed she had eyes only for him and his doings. What went forward in the pauses of the tilting I could not mark, inasmuch as my eyes and ears were their Majesties' alone.

Now, two more knights sprang forth. What cared I of what nation they were, what arms they bore and what they and their horses might do; I had somewhat else to think of. Ursula and I had long been at war, but to-day I felt nought but compassion for her; and

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indeed, on this very day, when she believed she had won the victory, she more needed pity than when she had so besought Heaven to grant her Herdegen's love, inasmuch as my brother sat whispering to Ann with his hand on his heart. And Ann herself had put away all false seeming; and while she gazed into her lover's eyes with soft passion, Ursula sat bending her fan as though she purposed to break it.

To think of Ursula as ruling in our house, and of Ann pining with heart sickness was cruel grief, and yet were these two things almost less hard to endure than the shameless flightiness and strange demeanor of my noble brother, the pride of my heart.

The town council had voted eight hundred gulden to King Sigismund, and four hundred to the Queen; two hundred and thirty to Porro the jester, and great gifts to many of the notables and knights as a free offering from the city; and now, in a pause in the jousting, his Majesty announced his great delight at the faithful, bountiful, and overflowing hand held out to him by his good town of Nuremberg, which had ever been dear to his late beloved father King Charles. And then he pointed to the gentlemen of the council, who made a goodly and reverend show indeed in their long flowing hair and beards, their dark velvet robes bordered with fine fur, and thin gold chains; and he spoke of their noble and honorable dealing. I heard him say that each one of them was to be respected as joint ruler with him over that which was his own, and likewise in greater matters. Each one was his equal in

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manly virtue, and the worthy peer of his Imperial self. Then he pointed out to the Queen certain noble and goodly heads, and it was my part to make known whatsoever I could tell of their possessions and their manner of trade. The Hallers were well known to him, and not alone my best beloved, inasmuch as they did great trading with his kingdom of Hungary; and he was well pleased to see my Hans with his father as one of the council.

His gracious wife was pleased to compare the good order, and cleanness, and comfort of Nuremberg with the cities in their native country. Whereas she had already been into some of our best houses, and indeed into our own, she spoke well of the wealth, and art, and skill in all crafts of the Nuremberg folk, saying they had not their like in all the world so far as she knew. And then again she spoke her pleasure at the honorable seemliness of the councillors, and asked me many questions concerning this one and that, and, among the rest, concerning Master Ulman Pernhart. The royal pair marked, in one his noble brow, in another his long flowing hair, in a third his keen and shrewd eye, till presently King Sigismund asked his Fool, Porro, which of all the heads in the ranks opposite he might judge to be the wisest and weightiest. The jester's twinkling eyes looked along the rows of folk, and whereas they suddenly fell on little Dame Henneleinlein, the Honey-wife, who sat, as was her wont, with her head propped on her hands, he took the King's word up and answered in mock earnest: "Unless I am

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deceived it is that butter-cup queen, Nuncle, seeing that her head is so heavy that she is fain to hold it up with both hands."

And he pointed with his bauble to the old woman, who, as the bee-master's widow, had boldly thrust herself into the front rank with those of knight's degree; and there she sat, in a gown of bright yellow brocade which Cousin Maud had once given her, stretching her long neck and resting her head on her hands. The King and Queen, looking whither the Fool pointed, when they beheld a little old woman instead of a stately councillor, laughed aloud; but the jester bowed right humbly towards the dame, and, she, so soon as she marked that the eyes of his Majesty and his gracious lady were turned upon her, and that her paltry person was the object of their regard, fancied that I had peradventure named her as being Ann's cousin, or as the widow of the deceased bee-master who, long years ago, had led the Emperor Charles to see the bee-gardens, so she made reverence again and again, and meanwhile laid her head more and more on one side, ever leaning more heavily on her hand, till the King and Queen laughed louder than ever and many an one perceived what was doing. The cup-bearer and chamberlain drew long faces, and Porro at last ended the jest by greeting the old woman with such dumbshow as no one could think an honor. The cunning little woman saw now that she was being made game of, and whereas not their Majesties alone, but all the Court about them were holding their sides, and she saw that

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I was in their midst, she believed me to be at the bottom of their mischief, and cast at me such vengeful glances as warned me of evil in store.

After this tourney there was to be a grand dance in the School of Arms, to which their Majesties were bidden with all the princes, knights, and notables of the Diet, and the *patricians* of the town. Next day, being Saint Clara's day, there would be a great feast at the Tetzels' house by reason that it was the name-day of Dame Clara, Ursula's grandmother, and the eldest of their kin. At this banquet Herdegen's betrothal was to be announced to all their friends and kindred — this my uncle whispered to me as he went off after the jousting to attend the King, who had sent for him. The old man had seen nought of Herdegen's doings with Ann, by reason that he and old Tetzel had both been seated on the same side of the lists, and the tall helmets and feathers had hidden the young folks from his sight. So assurance and contentment even yet beamed in his eye.

The tourney had lasted a long time. I scarce had time enough to change my weed for the dance. Till this day I had sported like a fish in this torrent of turmoil and pleasure; but to-day I was weary. My body was in pain with my spirit, and I would fain have staid at home; but I minded me of the Queen who, albeit she was so much older, and was watched by all — every one expecting that she should be gracious — in her heavy royal array, went through all this of which I was so weary.

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Meanwhile a great storm had burst upon us and passed over; all creatures were refreshed, and I likewise uplifted my head and breathed more freely. The fencing school — a great square chamber, as it is to this day, with places all round for the folk to look on — was lighted up as bright as day. My lover and I, now in right good heart once more, paced through the Polish dance led by the King and Queen. Ann's mother had been compelled to stay at home, to tend the master's old mother, and my friend had come under Cousin Maud's protection. She was led out to dance by Junker Henning; his fellow country-man, Sir Apitz von Rochow, walked with Ursula and courted her with unfailing ardor. Franz von Welemisl, who was wont to creep like her shadow, and who was again a guest at the Tetzels' house, had been kept within doors by the cough that plagued him. Likewise I looked in vain for Herdegen.

The first dance indeed was ended when he came in with my great-uncle; but the old knight looked less confidently than he had done in the morning.

Ann was pale, but, meseemed fairer than ever in a dress of pomegranate-red and white brocade, sent to her from Italy by her step-father's brother, My lord Bishop, by the hand of Cardinal Branda. As soon as I had presently begun to speak with her, she was carried off by Junker Henning, and at that same moment my grand-uncle came towards me to ask who was that fair damsel of such noble beauty with whom I was but now speaking. He had never till now beheld Ann

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close at hand, and how gladly did I reply that this was the daughter of Pernhart the town Councillor and she to whom Herdegen had plighted his faith.

The old man was startled and full wroth yet, by reason of all the fine folk about us, he was bound to refrain himself, and he presently departed.

The festival went forward and I saw that Herdegen danced first with Ursula and then with Ann. Then they stood still near the flower shrubs which were placed round about the hall to garnish it, and it might have been weened from their demeanor that they had quarrelled and had come to high words. I would fain have gone to them, but the Queen had bid me stay with her and never ceased asking me a hundred questions as to names and other matters.

At last, or ever it was midnight, their Majesties departed. I breathed more freely, put my hand on my Hans' arm, and was minded to bid him take me to Herdegen and speak out my mind, but my brother, as it fell, prevented me. He came up to me and with what a mien! His eyes flashing, his cheeks burning, his lips tight-set. He signed to me and Hans to follow whither he went, and then passionately besought us that we would depart from the dance for a while with him and his sweetheart, that was Ann. Such an entreaty amazed us greatly, yet, when he told us that she would go no whither with him save under our care, and that everything depended on his learning this very hour how he stood with her, we did his will. And he likewise told us that he had not indeed given his word that

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morning to my grand-uncle and Jost Tetzel, but had only pledged his word that he would give them his answer next day.

So presently Hans and I stole out behind the pair, out into the road. I, for my part, was well content and thankful and, when we beheld them accuse and answer each other right doughtily, we laughed, and were agreed that Aunt Jacoba's counsel had led to a good issue; and I told my Hans that I should myself take a lesson from all this and let the smart Junkers and Knights make love to me to their hearts' content, if ever I should be moved to play him a right foolish trick.

Presently, when we had many times paced the road to and fro the Pernharts' house, Ann was minded to knock at the door; but behold she was saved the pains. Mistress Henneleinlein just then came out whereas she had been helping Dame Giovanna to tend the sick grandmother. The lantern Eppelein carried in front of us was not so bright as the sun, yet could I see full plainly the old woman's venomous eye; and what high dudgeon sounded in her voice! Each one had his meed, even my Hans, to whom she cried: "Keep thy bride out of Porro's way, Master Haller. It ill-beseems the promised wife of a worshipful Councillor to be casting her lot in with a Fool! Howbeit, to laugh is better than to weep, and he laughs longest who laughs last!" And thereupon she herself laughed loudly and, with a scornful nod to Ann, turned her back on us.

All was still in Master Pernharts' house; he himself

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had gone to rest. At Herdegen's bidding we followed him into the hall, and there he clasped Ann to his heart, and declared to us that now, and henceforth for ever, they were one. Whereupon we each and all embraced; but my friend clung longest to me, and whispered in my ear that she was happier than ever she could deserve to be. Herdegen asked me whether now he had made all right, and whether I would be the same old Margery again? And I right gladly put up my lips for his to kiss; and the returned prodigal, who had come back to that which was his best portion, was like one drunk with wine. He was beside himself with joy, so that he clasped first me and then Hans in his arms, and slapped Eppelein, who carried a lantern to show us the pools left by the storm of rain, again and again on the shoulder, and thrust a purse full of money into his free hand, albeit there was an end now of my grand-uncle's golden bounty. Nought would persuade him to go back to the dancing-hall, to meet Ursula and her kin; and when he presently departed from us we heard him along the street, singing such a love song as no false heart may imagine, as glad as the larks which would now ere long be soaring to the sky.

We got back to the great hall. The dancing and music were yet at their height; our absence we deemed had scarce been marked; howbeit, as soon as we entered, my grand-uncle made enquiry "where Herdegen might be," and when I looked about me at haphazard I beheld — my eyes did not cheat me — I beheld Mistress Henneleinlein in one of the side-stalls.

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No man told me, yet was I sure and certain that she was saying somewhat which concerned me, and presently I discerned in the dim back-ground the feathered plume which Ursula had worn at the dance. My heart beat with fears; every word spoken by the old Dame would of a surety do us a mischief. Hans mocked at my alarms and at a maid's folly in ever taking to herself matters which concern her not.

Then Ursula came forth into the hall again, and how she swept past us on Junker Henning's arm.

A young knight of the Palatinate now led me out to a dance I had erewhile promised him.

We stopped for lack of breath. The festival was over; yet did Ursula and the Junker walk together. He was hearkening eagerly to all she might say, and on a sudden he clapped his hand into hers which she held out to him, and his eyes, which he had held set on the floor, fired up with a flash. Presently he and the Knight von Rochow made their way, arm in arm through the press, and both were laughing and pulling their long red beards.

I still clung to my lover's arm and entreated him to take me to speak with Junker Henning, inasmuch as I sorely wanted to question him; but the Junker diligently kept far from us. Nevertheless we at last stayed him, and after that I had enquired, as it were in jest, whether he had healed his old feud with Mistress Ursula and concluded a truce, or peradventure made peace with her, he answered me, in a tone all unlike his wonted frank and glad manner, that this for a while

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must remain privy to him and her, and that we should scarce be the first to whom he should reveal the matter; and forthwith he bid us farewell with a courtly reverence. But my lover would not let him thus depart, and asked him, calmly, what was the interpretation of this speech, whereupon Rochow spoke for his young fellow-countryman, and enquired, in the high-handed and lordly tone which ever marked his voice and manner, whether here, in the native land of Nuremberg playthings, love and faith were accounted of as toys.

Junker Henning however, broke in, and said, casting a warning look at me: "Far be it from him to break friendship with an honorable gentleman, such as my Hans, before having an explanation." And he held out his hand somewhat more readily than before, bowed sweetly to me and led away his cousin.

At last we got out with the Haller parents and Cousin Maud. The old folks got into litters, and the serving men were lighting the way before me to mine, when my lover stayed me, saying: "It is already grey in the East. Never before were we together so well betimes, Margery, and happy hours are few. If thou'rt not too weary, let us walk home together in this fresh morning air."

I was right well-content and we went gently forward, I clinging to him closely. He felt how high my heart was beating and, when he asked me whether it was for love that it beat so fast, I confessed in truth that, whereas the Brandenburgers outdid all other

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knights in the kingdom, in defiance and hotheadedness, I feared lest there should be a passage of arms betwixt Junker Henning and my brother Herdegen. But Hans made answer that, if it were the Brandenburgers intent to challenge him, he could not hinder it; yet he trowed it would be to their own damage; that Herdegen had scarce found his match at the Paris school of arms; and at least should we not mar this sweet morning walk by such fears.

And he held me closer to him, and while we slowly wandered on he poured forth his whole heart to me, and confessed that through all his lonely life in foreign lands he had ever lacked a great matter; that even with the gayety of his favorite comrades, even when his best diligence had been crowned with great issues, yet had he never had full joy in life. Nor was it till my love had made him a complete and truly happy man that he had felt, as it were, whole, inasmuch as that alone had stilled the strange craving which till then had made his heart sick.

Yea, and I could tell him that it had been the same with me; and as for what more we said, verily it should rather have been sung to sweet and lofty music on the lute and mandoline. Two rightly matched souls stood revealed each to each, and Heaven itself, meseemed, was opened in the strait ways of our town.

We kissed as we stood on the threshold of the Schopper-house, and when at length we must need part he held me once more to his heart, longer than ever he had before, and tore himself away; and laying

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his hands on my shoulders, as he looked into my eyes in the pale light of dawn, he said: "Come what may, Margery, we love each other truly and have learned through each other what true happiness means; and nevertheless we are as yet but in the March-moon of our love, and its May days, which are sweeter far, are yet to come. But even the March-joy is good — right good to me."

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CHAPTER III.

I HAD forgotten my fears and gloomy forebodings by the time I climbed into bed in my darkened chamber. Sleep forthwith closed my eyes, and I lay without even a dream till Cousin Maud waked me. I turned over by reason that I was still heavy with slumber; yet she stood by my bed, and scarce half a quarter of an hour after, lo, again I felt her hand on my shoulder and woke up quaking, with a cold sweat on my brow. I had dreamed that I was riding out in the Lorenzer-wald with Hans and my grand-uncle and other some; but we went slowly and softly, by reason that all our horses fell lame. And it fell that on the very spot where Ann had flown into Herdegen's arms I beheld a high, yellow grave-stone, and on it was written in great black letters: "HANS HALLER."

Hereupon I had started up with a loud cry, and it was long or ever my brain was clear as to the world about me. Cousin Maud laughed to see me so drunk asleep, as was not my wont; yet could she not deny that my dream boded no good. Nevertheless, quoth she, it was small marvel that such a heathen Turkish turmoil as we had been living in should beget monstrous fancies in a young maid's brain. She would of set pur-

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pose have left me to sleep the day through, to give me strength; howbeit Herdegen had twice come to ask for me, and so likewise had Ann and Hans, and it wanted but an hour and a half of noon. This made me laugh; nevertheless I minded me then and there of all that had befallen last night at Pernhart's house-door and in the school of arms, and, moreover, that we were bidden this day to eat with the Tetzels; also that they, and eke my grand-uncle, were still in the belief that Herdegen's betrothal to Ursula might be at once proclaimed to their friends.

I began to dress in haste and fear, and Susan was in the act of plaiting my hair when Cousin Maud flew in to say that Queen Barbara had sent her own litter to carry me to her. Thus had I to make all speed.

The royal quarters in the castle had been newly ordered by the town at his Majesty's desire, and they were indeed bravely decked; yet never had the like show pleased me less. The Queen was giving audience to the Pope's Legate, to their excellencies the envoys from the Greek Emperor, to my Lord Conrad the Elector of Maintz, and many more nobles. She had made so bold as to declare that the German maidens were no less skilled in the art of song than the damsels of Italy, and had bidden me to her in such hot haste that I might let the notables there assembled hear a few lays. I might not say nay to the royal behest; for better, for worse, I must fain take my lute and sing, at first alone, and then with my lord Conte di Puppi. Our voices presently brought the King to the chamber,

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and in truth I won praise enough if I had best cared to hear it. Nay, for the first time it was a torment to me to sing, and when the notables had all been sent forth, and I was alone with the Queen and her ladies, I knew not what ailed me but I burst into tears, hot and bitter tears. The gracious Queen took me in her arms with womanly sweetness, but while she gave me her phial of vinegar to smell, and spoke words of comfort, I was suddenly scared at hearing close behind me right woeful sobbing and sighing, as from a woman's breast. I looked about me, and beheld Porro, the Jester, who had cast himself on a couch and was mocking me, pulling such a grimace the while that his smooth, long, thin face seemed grown to the length of two lean faces. The sight was so merry that I was fain to laugh. Whereas he nevertheless ceased not from sobbing, the Queen reproved him and bid him not carry his fooling too far. Whereupon he sobbed out: "Nay, royal and gracious Coz, thou art in error. Never have I so shamelessly forgotten to play my part as Fool, as at this moment. Alack, alack! what a thing is life! Were we not one and all born fools, and if we did but measure it as it is now and ever shall be, with the wisdom of the sage, we should never cease to bewail ourselves, from the nurse's rod to the scythe of death."

Whether Porro were in earnest I could not divine; his face, like a mystic oracle, might bear manifold interpretations; verily his speech went to my heart. And albeit hitherto life had brought me an hundredfold more reasons for thanksgiving than sorrow, meseemed that

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it had many griefs in store. The Queen indeed replied full solemnly: "Peradventure it is true. Yet forget not that it is not as Sage that you attend us.—Moreover I, as a good Hungarian, know my Latin, and the great Horatius Flaccus puts your dismal lore to shame; albeit, as a Christian woman, I am fain to confess that it is wiser and more praiseworthy to bewail our own sins and the sins of the world, and to meditate on the life to come, than to live only for present joys. As for thee, sweet maid, for a long time yet thou may'st take pleasure in the flowers, even though venom may be hidden in their cups."

"Men are not wont to eat them," replied the fool. "And I have often marvelled wherefor the flighty butterfly wears such gay and painted wings, while every creature that creeps and grubs is grey or brown and foul to behold."

Whereupon he burst into loud laughter and such boisterous mirth that we fairly wept for merriment, and my lady Queen bid him hold his peace.

On my departing I had need to pass through the King's audience-chamber. He was bidding my Hans depart right graciously, and I went forth into the castle yard with Masters Tucher, Stromer, and Schürstab, all members of the Council. I fancy I hear them now thanking Hans for his fearless manfulness in saying to his Majesty that the treasure-chest must ever be empty if the old disorder were suffered to prevail. Likewise they approved the well-devised plan which he had proposed for the bettering of such matters, and my

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heart beat high with pride as I perceived the great esteem in which the worshipful elders of our town held their younger fellow.

Hans might not part company from them; but when I got into the litter he whispered to me: "Be not afraid — as to Herdegen and the Junker — you know. Farewell till we meet at the Tetzels'."

When I came home I learnt that my brother, and Ann, and then Eppelein had come to ask for me; now must I change my attire for the feast, and my heart beat heavy in my bosom. The bold Brandenburger and my brother were perchance at this very hour crossing swords.

Cousin Maud, who now knew all, and I stepped out of our litters at the Tetzels' door. Eppelein was standing by the great gate, booted and spurred, holding two horses by their bridles. My lord who spoke with him was my dear Hans. We went into the hall together, and as our eyes met, I wist that there was evil in the air. The letter he held bid him ride forthwith to Altenperg. Junker Henning and my brother were minded to have a passage of arms, and with sharp weapons. This, however, they might not do within the limits of the city save at great risk, inasmuch as that the town was within the King's peace, and by a severe enactment knight or squire, lord or servant, in short each and every man was threatened by the Emperor with outlawry, who should make bold to provoke another to challenge him, or to lift a weapon against another with evil intent, be he who he might, through-

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out the demesne of Nuremberg or so long as the diet was sitting. Hence they would go forth to Altenperg, inasmuch as it was the nearest to arrive at of any township without the limits of the city.

All this my lover had heard betimes that morning; but Herdegen had told him that Master Schlebitzer and a certain Austrian Knight would attend him. Now the letter was to say that they had both played him false; the former in obedience to the stern behest of his father, the town-councillor; the second by reason that his Duke commanded his attendance. And Herdegen hereby urgently besought my Hans that he would take the place thus left unfilled and ride forthwith to Altenperg.

Nor was this all the letter. In it my brother set forth that he had pledged his word solemnly and beyond recall to Ann and her parents, and entreated my lover to declare to the Tetzels and to his grand-uncle that henceforth and forever he renounced Ursula. He would speak of the matter at greater length at the place of meeting.

Cousin Maud and Hans and I held a brief council, and we were of one mind: that this message should not be given to the Tetzels till after the great dinner and when we should know the issue of the combat. My heart urged me indeed to desire my lover to forego this ride, and I mind me yet how I implored him with uplifted hands and how he forced himself to put them from him with steadfast gentleness. And when he told me that he for certain, if any one, could pacify the

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combatants or ever blood should be shed, I gazed into his brave and manful and kind face, and methought whither he went all must be for the best, and I cried with fresh assurance: "Then go!" Every word do I remember as though it were graven in brass.

Eppelein cracked his whip against his leathern boot-tops; old Tetzel's leaden voice cried out to enquire where we were lingering, and a silken train came rustling down the stairs. My lover kissed his hand to me, and I went forth with him into the court-yard.

His fiery horse gave him so much to do that he never marked my farewell. On a sudden it flashed through my brain that this was that very horse which my grand-uncle had given to Herdegen, and herein again, meseemed, was an omen of ill. Likewise I noted that Hans was in silken hose with neither spurs nor riding-boots. Howbeit the Hallers had many horses; and as a lad he had been wont to ride with or without a saddle, and was a rider whom none could unhorse, even in the jousting-ring.

He had soon quelled his steed and was trotting lightly over the stones, followed by Eppelein; but as he vanished round the first corner meseemed that the bourn stone, as he rode past it, was turned into the yellow gravestone I had seen in my dream, and that again I saw the great black letters of the name: "Hans Haller."

I passed my hands across my eyes to chase away the hideous vision, and I was young enough and brave enough to return Ursula's greeting without any quaking

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of my knees. Cousin Maud, meanwhile, had walked up the stairs, snorting and fuming like a boiling kettle; nor could she be at peace, even among the company who were awaiting the bidding to table. Many an one marked that something more than common was amiss with her. I refrained myself well enough, and I excused my brother's and my lover's absence with a plea of weighty affairs. My grand-uncle, however, guessed the truth, and when I gave true answer to his short, murmured questions he wrathfully cried: then these were the thanks he got! Henceforth he would plainly show how he, who had been a benefactor, could deal with the youth who had dared to mock his authority. Hereupon I besought him first to grant me a hearing for a few words; but he waved me away in ire, and signed to Ursula, who hung on his arm, and she set her lips tight when he presently with wrathful eyes whispered somewhat in her ear whereof I believed I could guess the intent. And when I beheld her call Sir Franz von Welemisl to her side and give him her hand, speaking a few words in a low voice, I discerned that in truth she knew all.

She presently led her father aside and told him somewhat which brought the blood to his ashy face, and led him to say her nay right vehemently. But, as she was wont, she made good her own will and he shrugged his shoulders, wrathful indeed, but overmastered by her.

During this space the great door of the refectory had been thrown open, and when Tetzel with his old

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mother moved that way, desiring the guests to follow him, my Uncle Christian, Ann's faithful friend, whispered to me that Herdegen had told him that he was now pledged to his "dear little warder," and likewise what was on hand between him and the Junker von Beust. I might be easy, quoth he; the Brandenburger would have a bitter taste of Nuremberg steel, of that he was fully assured. And he ended his speech with a merry: "Hold up your head, Margery."

Then we all sat down at the laden table, Dame Clara sitting at the top, albeit she looked but sullen and ill to please.

Ursula had chosen to set Sir Franz by her side. Herdegen's seat, at her left hand, was vacant; and she bid her white Brabant hound, as though in jest, to leap into it. The meal was served, but it all went in such gloomy silence that Master Muffel, of the town-council, whom they named Master Gall-Muffel, whispered across the table to my Uncle Christian "was it not strange to give a funeral feast without ever a corpse." Again I shuddered. My jovial uncle had already lifted his glass, and stretching himself at his ease he nodded to me, and drank, saying loud enough for all to hear: "To the last pledged couple, and the faithfullest pair of lovers."

I nodded back to him, for I wist what he meant, and drank with all my heart. Ursula had meanwhile kept her ears and eyes intent on us, and she now signed to her father and he slowly rose, clinked on his glass, and seeing that many were hearkening for what

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he should say, he declared to his guests that he had bidden them to this banquet not alone to do honor to the name-day of his venerable mother, whose praises his friend Master Tucher had eloquently spoken, but rather that he might announce to them the betrothal of his daughter Ursula to the noble knight and baron Franz von Welemisl. Then was there shouting and clinking and emptying of wine cups, whereat old Dame Clara Tetzel, who was deaf and had failed to gather the purport of her son's address, cried aloud: "Is young Schopper come at last then?"

Hereupon Sir Franz turned pale; he had gone up to the old woman, glass in hand, with Ursula, and she now spoke into her grand-dame's ear to explain the matter. The old woman looked first at her son and then at my grand-uncle, and shook her head; nevertheless she put a good face on a bad case, gave Sir Franz her hand to kiss, and was duly embraced by Ursula; yet she sat nodding her head up and down, and ever more shrewdly as she heard the bridegroom cough. Amazement sat indeed on the faces of all the guests; howbeit the iee was broken, and the silent and gloomy company had on a sudden turned right mirthful. Cousin Maud, meseemed, was the most content of all. Ursula's betrothal had rescued her favorite from great peril, and henceforth her plumed head-gear was at rest once more.

All about me was talk and laughter, glasses ringing, voices uplifted in set speeches, and many a shout of gratulation. When a betrothal is in the wind, folks

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ever believe that they have hold of the guiding clue to happiness, even if it be between a simpleton and a deaf mute.

The seat on my left hand, which my lover should have filled, remained empty; on my right sat his reverence Master Sebald Schürstab, the minorite preacher and prior who, so soon as he had spoken in honor of one toast, fixed his eyes on the board and thought only of the next. Thus, in the midst of all this mirthful fellowship, there was nought to hinder my fears and hopes from taking their way. Each time that a cry of "Hoch!" was raised, I roused me and joined in; scarce knowing, however, in whose honor. Likewise the hall waxed hotter and hotter, and the air right heavy to breathe.

To-day again, as yesterday, a storm burst over us. Albeit the sun was not yet set, it was presently so dark that lights had been brought in and fifty tapers in the silver candlesticks added to the heat. The lightning flashes glared in at the curtained windows like a flitting lamp, and the roar of the thunder shook the panes which rattled and clanked in their leaden frames. The reverend Prior called on the blessed saints whose special protection this house had never neglected to secure, and crossed himself. We all did the same, and had soon forgotten the storm without. The glasses ere long were clinking once more. I watched the numberless dishes borne in and out — roasted peacocks, with showy spread tails and crested heads raised as it were in defiance; boars' heads, with a lemon in their mouth

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and gaily wreathed; huge salmon lying in the midst of blue trout, with scarlet crawfish clinging to them; pasties and skilfully-devised sweetmeats; nay, now and again, I scarce consciously put forth my hand and carried this or that morsel to my mouth but whether it were bread or ginger my tongue heeded not the savor. Silver tankards and Venetian glasses were filled from flasks and jugs; I heard the guests praising the wines of Furstenberg and Bacharach, of Malvoisie and Cyprus, and I marked the effects of the noble and potent grape-juice, nay, now and then I played the part of "warder" to Uncle Christian; yet meseemed that it was only by another's will or ancient habit that I raised a warning finger. Was I in truth at a banquet or was I only dreaming that I sat as a guest at the richly-spread board? The only certain matter was that the storm was overpast, and that no hail nor rain now beat upon the window panes. How wet must my Hans be, who had ridden forth in court array, without a cloke to cover him.

To judge by the voices and demeanor of the men-folk the end of the endless meal must surely be not far off, and indeed dishes were by this time being served with packets of spices and fruits and pies and sweet-meats for the little ones at home. I drew a deeper breath, and methought the company would soon rise from the table, forasmuch as that Jost Tetzel had already quitted his seat. Then I beheld his pale face through a curtain and his lean hand beckoning to my grand-uncle. He likewise rose, and Ursula followed

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him. Forthwith, from without came a strange noise of footsteps to and fro and many voices. A serving man came to hail forth Master Ebner and Uncle Tucher, and the muttering and stir without waxed louder and louder. The guests sat in silence, gazing and enquiring of each other. Somewhat strange, and for certain somewhat evil, had befallen.

My heart beat in my temples like the clapper of an alarm-bell. That which was going forward, and to which one after another was called forth, was my concern; it must be, and mine alone. I felt I could not longer keep my place, and I had pushed back my seat when I saw Uncle Tucher standing by Cousin Maud, and his kind and worthy face, still ruddy from the wine he had drunk, was a very harbinger of horror and woe. He bent over my cousin to speak in her ear.

My eyes were fixed on his lips, and lo! she, my second mother, started up hastily as any young thing and, clasping her hand to her breast she well-nigh screamed: "Jesu-Maria! And Margery!"

All grew dark before my eyes. A purple mist shrouded the table, the company, and all I beheld. I shut my eyes, and when presently I opened them once more, close before me, as it were within reach, behold the yellow headstone with black letters thereon, as in my dream; and albeit I closed my eyes again the name "Hans Haller" was yet there and the letters faded not, nay, but waxed greater and came nigher, and meseemed were as a row of gaping werewolves.

I held fast by the tall back of my heavy chair to

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save me from falling, on my knees; but a firm hand thrust it aside, and I was clasped in a pair of old yet strong arms to a faithful heart, and when I heard Cousin Maud's voice in mine ear, though half-choked with tears, crying: "My poor, poor, dear good Margery!" meseemed that somewhat melted in my heart and gushed up to my eyes; and albeit none had told me, yet knew I of a certainty that I was a widow or ever I was a wife, and that Cousin Maud's tears and my own were shed, not for Herdegen, but for him, for him. . . .

And behold, face to face with me, who was this? Ursula stood before me, her blue eyes drowned in tears — tears for me, telling me that my woe was deep enough and bitter enough to grieve even the ruthless heart of my enemy.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE storm had cleared the air once more. How fair smiled the blue sky, how bright shone the sun, day after day and from morning till night; but meseemed its splendor did but mock me, and many a time I deemed that my heart's sorrow would be easier to bear with patience if it might but rain, and rain and rain for ever. Yea, and a grey gloomy day would have brought rest to eyes weary with weeping. And in my sick heart all was dark indeed, albeit I had not been slow to learn how this terror had come about.

That was all the tidings I had craved; as to how life should fare henceforth I cared no more, but let what might befall without a wish or a will. Sorrow was to me the end and intent of life. I spurned not my grief, but rather cherished and fed it, as it were a precious child, and nought pleased me so well as to cling to that alone.

Howbeit I seldom had the good hap to be left to humor this craving. I was wroth with the hard and bitter world for its cruelty; yet it was in truth that very world, and its pitiless call to duty, which at that time rescued me from worse things. Verily I now bless each one who then strove to rouse me from my selfish and gloomy sorrow, from the tailor who cut my mourn-

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ing weed to Ann, whose loving comfort even was less dear to me than the solitude in which I might give myself up to bitter grieving. All I cared for was to hear those who could tell of his last hours and departing from this life, till at last meseemed I myself had witnessed his end.

From all the tidings I could learn, I gathered that old Henneleinlein, whose gall had been raised against me by the Court Fool, had no sooner parted from us at Master Pernhart's door than she had hastened to the school of arms to make known to Ursula that my brother had plighted his troth anew to his cast-off sweetheart. Hereupon Ursula had dared to say to the Junker that Herdegen was her knight, who would pick up his glove which he had cast down at the former dance; but that he nevertheless was playing a two-fold game, and had treacherously promised Ann to wed her, to win her favor likewise. Hereupon the Brandenburger had been filled with honest ire, had sworn to Ursula that he would chastise her false lover, and was ready, not alone to accept my brother's defiance, but to fight with ruthless fury.

Thus Ursula's plot had prospered right well, inasmuch as, so long as she hoped to win Herdegen, she had been in deathly fear lest the Junker should fall out with him; whereas, now that in her wrath she only desired that the faithless wight should give an account to the Junker's sword, she thought fit in her deep and malignant fury to brand my brother as the challenger, knowing that if the combat had a bloody issue he

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would of a surety suffer heavy penalty. And in truth she had not reckoned wrongly when she declared that my brother, whom she knew only too well, would be her ready champion.

On the morning next after the great dance she had addressed a brief letter to Herdegen beseeching him, for the friendship's sake which had bound them from their youth up, and by reason that she had no brother, to teach Junker von Beust that a patrician's daughter of Nuremberg should not lack a true knight, when Brandenburg pride dared to cast scorn on her in the face of all the world. My brother's response to this letter was a challenge to the Junker; yet had he not perchance been in such hot haste, save that he had long burned to punish the overweening young noble who had given him many an uneasy hour. He scarce, indeed, would have drawn his sword at Ursula's behest, inasmuch as he could plainly see that what she had most at heart was to make their breach wear such seeming to other folks as though he, who had been looked upon by the whole city as her pledged husband, had not quitted her, but had been ready rather to shed his heart's blood in her service.

Verily Ursula believed that she had found a sure instrument of vengeance, whereas she had heard say that Junker Henning von Beust was one of the most dreaded swordsmen in the Marches. Herdegen, to be sure, was likewise famed in Nuremberg as a doughty champion; yet it is ever the way in Franconia, nay, and in all Germany, to esteem outlandish means more

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highly than the best at home. Moreover she had many a time heard my grand-uncle declare that the gentlemen of our patrician families were not above half knights, and her intent was to sacrifice Herdegen to the Brandenburger's weapon.

Howbeit she had reckoned ill. Hans, who did service to my brother as his second at Altenperg, after striving faithfully to make peace between the two, was witness how our Nuremberg swordsman, who had had the finest schooling at Erfurt, Padua, and Paris, not merely withstood the Brandenburger, but so far outdid him in strength and swiftness that the Junker fell into the arms of his friends with wounds in the head and breast, while Herdegen came forth from the fray with no more hurt than a slight scratch on the arm.

The witnesses saw what he could do with amazement, and Sir Apitz von Rochow avowed that at my brother's first thrust he foresaw his cousin's evil plight; and they said that during the combat the supple blade of the Nuremberger's bedizened sword was changed into a raging serpent, which wound in everywhere, and bit through iron and steel. Afterwards he set forth that perchance Junker Schopper, who was said to be even better versed in all manner of writing than in the use of his weapon, had made use of some magic art, whereat a pious Knight of the Marches would fain cross himself.

Now whereas Junker von Beust had been in attendance on the King's person, the end of the fray could not be hidden from his Majesty, and so soon as

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the wounded man had been carried into the priest's house at Altenperg for shelter and care, it was needful to remove his fortunate foe into surety from King Sigismund's wrath. In this matter both Rochow and Muschwitz, who were the Junker's seconds, demeaned them as true nobles, inasmuch as they offered my brother refuge and concealment in their castles, albeit they accused him between themselves of some secret art; but he who was so soon to die counselled him to bide a while with Uncle Conrad at the forest lodge, and see what he himself and other of his friends might do to win his pardon.

When, at length, my lover was about to depart, the storm had burst; wherefore the Brandenburgers besought him to tarry in the priest's house till it should be overpast. This he would not do, by reason that his sweetheart looked for him with a fearful heart, knowing that her brother was in peril; and forthwith he rode away. Herdegen gave him Eppelein to attend him, and to bring back to him such matters as he had need of, and so my beloved set forth for the town, the serving man riding behind him.

It rained indeed and lightened and thundered, yet all was well till, nigh to Saint Linhart, the hail came down, beating on them heavily. At that moment a burning flash, with a terrible crash of thunder, reft a tree asunder by the road-way; his powerful horse was maddened with fear, stood upright, fell back, and crushed his rider against the trunk of a poplar tree.

Never more did I look on the face of the true

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lover to whom I was so closely knit — save only in dreams; and I thank those who held me back from beholding his broken skull. To this day he rises before me, a silent vision, and I see him as he was in that hour when he gave me a parting kiss on our threshold, in the pale gleam of early morning, solemnly glad and in his festal bravery. Yet they could not hinder me from pressing my lips to the hands of the beloved body in its winding-sheet.

It was on a fair and glorious morning — the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin — when Hans Haller, Knight, *Doctor*, and Town councillor, the eldest of his ancient race, my dear lord and plighted lover, was carried to the grave. The velvet pall wherewith his parents covered the bier of their beloved and first-born son was so costly, that the price would easily have fed a poor household for years. How many tapers were burnt for him, how many masses said! Favor and good-will were poured forth upon me, and wherever I might go I was met with the highest respect. Even in my own home I was looked upon as one set apart and dedicated, whose presence brought grace, and who should be spared all contact with the common and lesser troubles of life. Cousin Maud, who was ever wont to mount the stair with an echoing tread and a loud voice, now went about stepping softly in her shoes, and when she called or spoke it was gently and scarce to be heard.

As for me I neither saw nor heard all this. It did not make me thankful nor even serve to comfort me.

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All things were alike to me, even the Queen's gracious admonitions. The diligent humility of great and small alike in their demeanor chilled me in truth; sometimes meseemed it was in scorn.

To my lover, if to any man, Heaven's gates might open; yet had he perished without shrift or sacrament, and I could never bear to be absent when masses were said for his soul's redemption. Nay, and I was fain to go to churches and chapels, inasmuch as I was secure there from the speech of man. All that life could give or ask of me, I had ceased to care for.

If, from the first, I had been required to bestir myself and bend my will, matters had not perchance have gone so hard with me. The first call on my strength worked as it were a charm. The need to act restored the power to act: and a new and bitter experience which now befell was as a draught of wine, making my heavy heart beat high and steady once more. Nought, indeed, but some great matter could have roused me from that dull half-sleep; nor was it long in coming, by reason that my brother Herdegen's safety and life were in peril. This danger arose from the fact that, not long ere the passage of arms at Altenperg, in despite of strait enactments, the peace of the realm had many times been broken under the very eyes of his Majesty by bloody combats, and the Elector Conrad of Maintz had gone hand in hand with him of Brandenburg to entreat his Majesty to make an example of this matter. These two were likewise the most powerful of all the electors; the spiritual prince had, at the closing of the

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Diet, been named Vicar of the Empire, and he of Brandenburg was commander-in-chief of all the Imperial armies. And his voice was of special weight in this matter, inasmuch as the great friendship which had hitherto bound him to the Emperor had of late cooled greatly, and both before and during the sitting of the Diet, his Majesty had keenly felt what power the Brandenburger could wield, and with what grave issues to himself.

Thus, when my lord the Elector and the high constable Frederick demanded that the law should be carried out with the utmost rigor in the matter of Herdegen, it was not, as many deemed, by reason that the King was not at one with our good town and the worshipful council, and that he was well content to vent his wrath on the son of one of its patrician families, but contrariwise, that his Majesty, who hated all baseness, had heard tidings of Herdegen's bloody deeds at Padua and his wild ways at Paris. Likewise it had come to his Majesty's ears that he had falsely plighted his troth to two maidens. Nay, and my grand-uncle had made known to King Sigismund that Ursula, who had been known to the Elector from her childhood up, had been driven by despair at Herdegen's breach of faith to give her hand to the sick Bohemian Knight, Sir Franz von Welemisl.

Moreover the Knight Johann von Beust, father of Junker Henning, had journeyed to Nuremberg to visit his wounded son; and whereas he learnt many matters from his son's friends around his sick-bed, he earnestly

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besought the Elector so to bring matters about that due punishment should overtake the Junker's foeman.

My lord the Elector had many a time showed his teeth to the knighthood of Brandenburg, appealing to law and justice when he had taken part with the citizens and humbled the overbearing pride of the nobles. It was now his part to show that he would not suffer noble blood to be spilt unavenged, though it were by the devilish skill of a citizen; forasmuch as that if indeed he should do so all men would know thereby that he was the sworn foe of the nobles of Brandenburg and kept so tight a hand on them, not for justice' sake, but for sheer hatred and ill-will.

When at a later day, I saw the old knight, with his ruddy steel-eaters' face and great lip-beard, and was told that in his youth he had been a doughty freebooter and highway robber, who by his wealth and power had made himself to be a mainstay of the Elector in Altmark, I could well imagine how his threats had sounded, and that all men had been swift to lend ear to his words. Yet that just King to whom he accused Herdegen gave a hearing to von Rochow and the other witnesses; they could but declare that all had been done by rule, and that Rochow had said from the first that of a certainty the devil himself guided Herdegen's sword. Muschwitz, indeed, was sure that he had seen his blade flash forth fire. Hereupon the father was urgent on the King's Majesty that he should seek to seize my brother, pronounce him a banished outlaw,

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and that whenever his person should be taken he was to be punished with death.

All this I learnt not till some time after, inasmuch as folks would not add new cause of grief to my present sorrow.

The way I was going could lead nowhither save to madness or the cloister; I had so lost my wits in self, that I weened that I had done my part for my brother when I had humbly entreated their Majesties to vouchsafe him their gracious pardon, and had signed my name to certain petitions in favor of the accused. Of a truth I wist not yet in what peril he stood, and rarely enquired for him when Uncle Conrad had assured me that he lay in safe hiding.

Sometimes, indeed, meseemed as though Ann and the others kept somewhat privy from me; but even all care to enquire was gone from me, nor cared I for aught but to be left in peace. And thus matters stood till rumor waxed loud and roused me from my leaden slumber.

I had passed the day for myself alone, refusing to see our noble guests; I was sitting in silence and dreaming by my spinning-wheel, which I had long ceased to turn, when on a sudden there were heavy steps and wrathful voices on the stairs. The door of the room was thrown open and, in spite of old Susan's resistance, certain beadles of the city came in, with two of the Emperor's men-at-arms. My cousin was not within doors, as had become common of late, and I was vexed and grieved to be thus unpleasantly sur-

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prised. I rose to meet the strangers, making sharp enquiry by what right they broke the peace of a Nuremberg patrician's household. Hereupon their chief made answer roundly that he was here by his Majesty's warrant, and that of the city authorities, to make certain whether Junker Herdegen Schopper, who had fled from the Imperial ban, were in hiding or no in the house of his fathers. At first it was all I could do to save myself from falling; but I presently found heart and courage. I assured the bailiffs that their search would be vain, albeit I gave them free leave to do whatsoever their office might require of them, only to bear in mind that great notables were guests in the house; and then I drew a deep breath and meseemed I was as a child forgotten and left in a house on fire which sees its father pressing forward to rescue it.

Hitherto no man had told me what fate it was that threatened my brother, and now that I knew, I hastily filled up the meaning of many a word to which I had lent but half an ear. My cousin's frequent absence in court array, Ann's tear-stained eyes and strange mien, and many another matter was now full plain to me.

My newly-awakened spirit and restored power asserted their rights, and, as in the days of old, neither could rest content till it knew for a certainty what it might do.

While Susan and the other serving folks, with certain of the retainers brought by our guests, were searching the house through, I hastily did on my shoes and garments for out-door wear, and albeit it was

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already dusk, I went forth. Yea, and I held my head high and my body straight as I went along the streets, whereas for these weeks past I had crept about hanging my head; meseemed that a change had come over my outward as well as my inner man. And as I reached Pernhart's house, with long swift steps, more folks would have seen me for what in truth I was: a healthy young creature, with a long span of life before me yet and filled with strength and spirit enough to do good service, not to myself alone, but to many another, and chiefest of all to my dearly beloved brother.

And when I was at my walk's end and stood before the old mother, — who was now recovered from her sickness and sitting upright and sound in her arm-chair with her youngest grandchild in her lap, — I knew forthwith that I had come to the right person.

The worthy old dame had not been slow to mark what ailed me; nay, if Cousin Maud had not besought her to spare my sorrowing soul, she long since had revealed to me what peril hung over Herdegen. She had not failed to perceive that my weary submission to ills which might never be remedied, had broken my power and will to fulfil what good there was in me. And now I stood before her, freed from that sleep-walking dulness of will, eager to know the whole truth, and declared myself ready to do all that in me lay to attain one thing alone, namely to rescue my brother. On this I learnt from the venerable dame's lips that now I was indeed the old Margery, albeit Cousin Maud had of late denied it, and with good reason; and the

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old woman was right, inasmuch as that the more terrible and unconquerable the danger seemed, the more my courage rose and the greater was my spirit. Now, too, I heard that what I had taken for love-sick weakness in Ann was only too-well founded heart-sickness; and that she likewise, on her part, had not been idle, but, under the guidance of Cousin Maud and Uncle Christian, had moved heaven and earth to succor her lover, albeit alas! in vain.

In truth the cause was as good as lost; and Uncle Christian, who ever hoped for the best, made it no secret that, in the most favorable, issue Herdegen must begin life afresh in some distant land. Yet was neither Ann nor I disposed to let our courage fail, and it was at that time that our friendship put forth fresh flowers. We fought shoulder to shoulder as it were, comrades in the struggle, full of love towards each other and of love for my brother; and when I bid her farewell and she would fain walk home with me, all those who dwelt in the coppersmith's house were of the same mind as men might be in a beleaguered town, who had been about to yield and then, on a sudden, beheld the re-inforcements approaching with waving banners and a blast of trumpets.

In truth there was a shrewd fight to be waged; and the stronghold which day by day waxed harder to conquer was my lord chief Constable, the Elector Frederick; his peer, the Elector of Maintz, put all on him when Cardinal Branda, who was Ann's kind patron, besought his mercy.

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Until I had been roused to this new care in life I had never been to court, in spite of many a gracious bidding from my lady, the Queen. My supplications found no answer, and when Queen Barbara granted me audience at my entreaty, though she received me graciously, yet would she not hear me out. She would gladly help, quoth she, but that she, like all, must obey the laws; and at last she freely owned that her good will would come to nought against the demands of the Elector of Brandenburg. The greatness of that wise and potent prince was plainly set before our eyes that same day, for on him, as commander-in-chief of the crusade to be sent forth against the Hussite heresy, the Emperor's own sword was solemnly bestowed in the church of Saint Sebald. It was girt on to him by reverend Bishops, after that he had received from the hand of the Pope's legate a banner which his Holiness had himself blessed, and which was borne before him by the Count of Hohenlohe as he went forth.

That it would be a hard matter to get speech with so potent a lord at such a time was plain to see; howbeit I was able to speak privily at any rate with his chamberlain, and from him I learned in what peril my brother was, inasmuch as not the Junker's father alone was bent on bringing him to extreme punishment, but likewise no small number of Nuremberg folk, who had of yore been aggrieved by my brother's over-bearing pride.

Every one who had ever met him in the streets with a book under his arm, or had seen him, late at

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night, through the lighted window-pane, sitting over his papers and parchments, was ready to bear witness to his study of the black arts. Thus the diligence which he had ever shown through all his wild ways was turned to his destruction; and it was the same with the open-handed liberality which had ever marked him, by reason that the poor, to whom he had tossed a heavy ducat instead of a thin copper piece, would tell of the Devil's dole he had gotten, and how that the coin had burnt in his hand. Nay and Eppelein's boasting of the gold his young lord had squandered in Paris, and wherewith he had filled his varlet's pockets, gave weight to this evil slander. Many an one held it for a certainty that Satan himself had been his treasurer.

Thus a light word, spoken at first as a figure of speech by the Knight von Rochow, had grown into a charge against him, heavy enough to wreck the honor and freedom of a man who had no friends, and even to bring him to the stake; and I know full well that many an one rejoiced beforehand to think that he should see that lordly youth with all his bravery standing in the pointed cap with the Devil's tongue hung round his neck, and gasping out his life amid the licking flames.

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CHAPTER V.

THE Diet was well-nigh over, yet had we not been able to gain aught in Herdegen's favor. One day my Forest Aunt, who had marked all our doings with wise counsel and hearty good-will, sent word that he on whose mighty word hung Herdegen's weal or woe, the Elector Frederich himself, had promised to visit at the Lodge next day to the end that he might hunt, and that we should ride thither forthwith.

By the time we alighted there his Highness had already come and gone forth to hunt the deer; wherefor we privily followed after him, and at a sign from Uncle Christian we came out of the brushwood and stood before him. Albeit he strove to escape from us with much diligence and no small craftiness, we would not let him go, and kept up with him, pressing him so closely that he afterwards declared that we had brought him to bay like a hunted beast. Of a truth no bear nor badger ever found it harder to escape the hounds than he, at that moment, to shut his eyes and ears against bright eyes and women's tongues made eloquent by Dame Love herself. Moreover my mourning array, worn as it was for a youth who had stood above most others in his love, would have checked any hard words on his lips; thus was he once more made

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to know that Eve's power was not yet wholly departed. Yet were we far from believing in any such power in ourselves, as we appeared before that great and potent sovereign, whose manly, calm, and withal fatherly dignity made him, to my mind, more majestic than the tall but unresting Emperor.

I can see him as he stood with his booted foot on the hart's neck, and turned his noble head, with its long, smooth grey hair, gazing at us with his great blue eyes, kindly at first, but presently with vexation and well-nigh in wrath.

We held our hands tight on our hearts, striving to call to mind some few of the words we had meditated with intent to speak them in defence of Herdegen. And our love, and our steadfast purpose that we would win grace and mercy for him came to our aid; and whereas my lord's first enquiry was to know whether I were that Mistress Margery Schopper who had been betrothed to his dear Hans Haller, too soon departed, my eyes filled with tears, but the memory of the dead gave me courage, so that I dared to meet the great man's eye, and was right glad to find that the words which in my dread I had forgot, now came freely to my mind. Likewise meseemed that, in overriding my own fears, I had conquered Ann's; whereas she had been pale and speechless, clinging to the folds of my dress, she now stood forth boldly by my side.

Then, when I had presented her to his Highness as Herdegen's promised bride, to whom he had been plighted in love from their childhood, I made known

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to his lordship that it was not my brother's desire, but that of my grand-uncle, that Ursula should be his wife. Likewise I strove to release my brother from the charge of making gold, by diligently showing that the old Knight had ever showered ducats on him to beguile him to his will. Then I spoke at length of Herdegen's skill with the sword, and hereupon Ann made bold to say that it would be well to bid her lover return in safe-keeping to Nuremberg, and there let him give proof of his skill with a weapon specially blessed by my lord Cardinal Julianus Cæsarinus, the Pope's legate, which could have no taint of devilish arts.

Thus did we give utterance to everything we had meditated beforehand; and albeit the Elector at first made wrathful answer, and even made as though he would turn his back on us, each time we made shift to hold him fast. Nay, or ever we had ceased he had taken his foot from the stag's neck, and at length we walked with him back to the forest lodge, half amused, yet half grieved, with the mocking words he tormented us with. Then he bid us quit him, promising that he would once more examine into the matter of that young criminal.

Within doors supper was now ready, but we, as beseemed us, kept out of the way. My brother's case was now in safe hands, inasmuch as my Uncle Conrad and Christian sat at table with my lord. Likewise we were much comforted, whereas my aunt told us that the elder Knight, Junker Henning von Beust's father, who

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was here in the Elector's following, had, of his own free will, said to her that he now rued his deed in so violently accusing Herdegen, by reason that his son, who was now past all danger, had earnestly besought him to save this man, whose skill was truly a marvel, and had likewise said that he whom Hans Haller had honored with his friendship could not have practised black arts. Also he held me dear as the widowed maid to whom his friend was to have been wed, and he could never forgive himself if fresh woe came upon me through him or his kith and kin.

All this was glad tidings indeed, not alone for Herdegen's sake, but also by reason that there are few greater joys than that of finding good cause to approve one whom we respect, and yet whom we have begun to doubt.

Ann and I went to our chamber greatly comforted, and in such good heart as at that time I could be, and when from thence I heard Uncle Christian's great voice, as full of jollity as ever, I was certain that matters were all for the best for Herdegen. Our last fears and doubts were ere long cleared away; while the gentlemen beneath were still over their cups a heavy foot tramped up the stairs, a hard finger knocked at our chamber door, and Uncle Christian's deep voice cried: "Are you asleep betimes or still awake, maidens?"

Whereupon Ann, foreboding good, answered in the gladness of her heart that we were long since sleeping sweetly, and my uncle laughed.

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"Well and good," quoth he, "then sleep on, and let me tell you what meseems your very next dream will be: You will be standing with all of us out in a green mead, and a little bird will sing: 'Herdegen is freed from his ban.' At this you will greatly rejoice; but in the midst of your joy a raven shall croak from a dry branch: 'Can it be! The law must be upheld, and I will not suffer the rascal to go unpunished.' Whereupon the little bird will twitter again: 'Well and good; 't will serve him right. Only be not too hard on him.' And we shall all say the same, and thereupon you will awake."

And he tramped down the stair again, and albeit we cried after him, and besought him to tell us more of the matter, he heard us not at all.

When we were at home again, lo, the Elector had done much to help us. I found a letter waiting for me, sealed with the Emperor's signet, wherein it was said that, by his Majesty's grace and mercy, my brother Herdegen was purged of his outlawry, but was condemned in a fine of a thousand Hungarian ducats as pain and penalty.

Thus the little bird and the raven had both been right. Howbeit, when I presently betook me to the castle to speak my thanks to the Empress, I was turned away; and indeed it had already been told to me that at Court this morning that sorrowful Margery, with her many petitions, was looked upon with other eyes than that other mirthful Margery, who had come with flowers and songs whensoever she was bidden. None but

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Porro the Jester seemed to be of the same mind as ever; when he met me in the castle yard he greeted me right kindly and, when I had told him of the tidings in the Emperor's letter, he whispered as he bid me good day: "If I had a fox for a brother, fair child, I would counsel him to lurk in his cover till the hounds were safe at home again. In Hungary once I met a certain fellow who had been kicked by a highway thief after he had emptied his pockets. I tell you what. A man may well pawn his last doublet, if he may thereby gain a larger. He need never redeem the first, and it is given some folks to coin gold ducats out of humbler folks' sins. Ah! If I had a fox for a brother!"

He sang the last words to himself as it were, and vanished, seeing certain persons of the Court.

Now I took this well-meant warning as it was intended; and albeit Ann and I were heartsick with longing to see Herdegen and to release him from his hiding, we nevertheless took patience. The legal guardians of our estate, having my uncle's consent, took my Cousin Maud's suretyship, and expressed themselves willing to pay the fine out of the moneys left by our parents, into the Imperial treasury. And that which followed thereafter showed us how wise the Fool's admonition had been.

The knight, Sir Apitz von Rochow, who had served as Junker Henning's second in the fight, tarried yet in Nuremberg, and this rude, arrogant youth had devoted himself with such true loving-kindness to the care of his

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young cousin, at first in the priest's house at Altenperg and afterwards in the Deutsch-haus in the town, that he had taken no rest, day nor night, until the Junker's father came, and then he fell into a violent fever. It was but of late that the leech had granted him to go out of doors, and his first walk was to our house to show me his sorrow for my grief, and to thank my cousin for many pleasant trifles which she had sent to him and the Junker during their sickness, to refresh them. At the same time he broke forth in loud and unstinted wrath against Sir Franz von Welemisl, and gave us to wit that with his whole heart he grudged him the fair Ursula, whose favor he himself had so diligently sued for since the first days of the Diet. From our house he went to the Tetzels', and then he and the Bohemian forthwith came to high words and defiant glances.

Shortly after this, and a few hours only after my brother's penalty had been paid into the Treasury, the two young gentlemen met in the nobles' wine-room by the Frohnwage, and von Rochow, heated by wine and heeding neither moderation nor manners, began to taunt Ursula's betrothed. After putting it to him that he had left the task to Herdegen of picking up the glove, "which peradventure he had thought was of too heavy leather," to which the other made seemly reply, he enquired, inasmuch as they were discoursing of marriage, whether the Church, which forbids the joining of those who are near of kin, hath not likewise the power to hinder a young and blooming maid from

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binding herself for life to a sickly husband. Such discourse was ill-pleasing by reason of the Bohemian's presence there: and the Junker went yet further, till to some speech made by old Master Grolaud, he made answer by asking what then might be a priest's duty, if the sick bridegroom failed to say "yes" at the altar by reason of his coughing? And as he spoke he cast a challenging look at Welemisl.

The hot blood of the Bohemian flew to his brain; or ever any one could hinder him, his knife was buried to the hilt in the other's shoulder. All hastened to help the Brandenburger, and when presently some turned to seize the criminal he was no more to be seen.

This dreadful deed caused just dismay, and most of all at Court, inasmuch as the chamberlain and the maid of honor in close attendance on their Majesties' persons were near kin to the Bohemian, whose mother was of the noble Hungarian house of Pereny.

As to the Emperor, he flew into great fury and threatened to cancel the murderer's coat of arms and punish him with death. Never within the peace of his realm, nay and under his very eyes, had so much noble blood been shed in base brawling as here in our sober city, and he would forthwith make an example of the guilty men. He would make young Schopper pay some penalty yet more than a mere fine, to that he pledged his royal word, and as for young Welemisl, he was minded to devise some punishment that should hinder many an over-bold knight from drawing his

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sword! And he commanded that not only his own constables and men-at-arms, but likewise the town bailiffs, should forthwith seek and take both those young men.

Only two days later Sir Franz was brought in by the city watch; he had dressed himself in the garments of a waggoner, but had betrayed himself in a tavern at Schwabach by his coughing. Howbeit his Majesty had by this time come to another mind; nay, Queen Barbara left him less peace than even the court-folks, for indeed her father, Count Cilly, was near of kin to the Perenys, and through them to the Welemisl.

The Emperor Sigismund was a noble-minded and easy-living prince, who once, when forty thousand ducats had been poured into his ever-empty treasure-chest, divided it forthwith among his friends, saying: "Now shall I sleep well, for that which broke my rest you bear away with you." And this light-hearted man, who was ever tossed hither and thither against his will, now saw that his peace was in evil plight by reason of Sir Franz. This was ill to bear; and whereas his royal wife called to mind in a happy hour that Welemisl had been provoked out of all measure by Rochow's scorn, and had done the deed out of no malice aforethought but, being heated with wine, in a sudden rage, and that he was in so far more worthy of mercy than young Schopper, who had shed noble blood with a guilty intent, counting on his skill as a swordsman, the Emperor surrendered at discretion. In this he was confirmed by his privy secretary, Caspar Slick, whom the Queen had beguiled; and this man, learned in the law,

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was ready with a decision which the Imperial magistrate gladly agreed to forthwith, as mild yet sufficient.

Matters in short were as follows: About ten years ago the Knight Sir Endres von Steinbach had slain a citizen of Nuremberg in a fray with the town, and had made his peace afterwards with the council under the counsel of the Abbot of Waldsassen: by taking on himself, as an act of penance, to make a pilgrimage to Vach and to Rome, to set up stone crosses in four convents, and henceforth to do service to the town in every quarrel, in his own person, with a fellowship of ten lances for the space of two years. All this he had duly done, and it came about that the Emperor now condemned the Bohemian and my brother both alike to make a pilgrimage, not only to Rome—inasmuch as their guilt was greater than Steinbach's—but likewise to Jerusalem, to the Holy Sepulchre and other sacred places. Welemisl was to pay the same penalty in money as Herdegen had paid, and in consideration of their having thus made atonement for the blood they had shed, and as their victims had escaped death, they were released from the doom of outlawry. On returning from their pilgrimage they were to be restored to their rank and estates, and to all their rights, lordships, and privileges.

Not long after this sentence was passed the Court removed from Nuremberg through Ratisbon, where the Emperor strove to make up his quarrel with the Duke of Bavaria, and then to Vienna; but ere his departing he gave strait orders to the chief magistrate to see that

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the two criminals should fare forth on their pilgrimage not longer than twenty-four hours after the declaration of their doom.

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CHAPTER VI.

SHALL I now set forth how that Ann and I found Herdegen in his hiding-place, a simple little bee-keeper's hut in the most covert part of the Lorenzerwald, a spot whither no horseman might pass; how that even in his poor peasant's weed my brother was yet a goodly man, and clasped his sweetheart in his arms as ardently as in that first day on his home-coming from Italy — and how that the dear, hunted fellow, beholding me in mourning dress, took his sister to his heart as soon as his plighted love had left the place free? Yea, for the dead had been dear to him likewise, and his love for me had never failed.

When we presently gave ourselves up in peace to the joy of being all together once more, I weened that his eye was more steadfast, and his voice graver and calmer than of old; and whensoever he spoke to me it was in a soft and heartfelt tone, which gave me comforting assurance that he grieved for my grief. And how sweetly and gravely did he beguile Ann to make the most of this sad meeting, wherein welcome and God-speed so closely touched. In the house once more I rejoiced in the lofty flight which lifted this youth's whole spirit above all things common or base; and his sweetheart's eyes rested on him in sheer delight as he

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talked with my uncle, or with the magistrate who had come forth with us to the Forest. And albeit it was in truth his duty to the Emperor his master, to fulfil his behest, nevertheless he gave us his promise that he would put off the announcement of the sentence till we should return to the town next day, and prolong our time together and with Cousin Maud as much as in him lay.

My aunt's eyes shone with sheer joy when they fell on her darling with Herdegen at her side, and she could say to herself no doubt that these two, who, as she conceived, were made for each other, would hardly have come together again but for her help. Or ever we set forth on the morrow, she called Herdegen to her once more to speak with him privily, and bid him bear in mind that if ever in his wanderings he should meet another youth — and he knew who — he might tell him that at home in the Lorenzerwald a mother's heart was yet beating, which could never rest till his presence had gladdened it once more.

My uncle rode with us into the town. It was at the gate that the magistrate told Herdegen what his fate should be: that he must leave Nuremberg on the morrow at the same hour; and to my dying day I shall ever remember with gladness and regret the meal we then sat down to with our nearest and dearest.

Cousin Maud called it her darling's condemnation supper. She had watched the cooking of every dish in the kitchen, and chosen the finest wine out of the cellar. Yet the victual might have been oatmeal por-

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ridge, and the noble liquor the smallest beer, and it would have been no matter to our great, albeit melancholy gladness. And indeed, no man could have gazed at the pair now come together again after so many perils, and not have felt his heart uplifted. Ah! and how dear to me were those twain! They had learnt that life was as nothing to either of them without the other, and their hearts meseemed were henceforth as closely knit as two streams which flow together to make one river, and whose waters no power on earth can ever sunder. They sat with us, but behind great posies of flowers, as it were in an isle of bliss; yet were they in our midst, and showed how glad it made them to have so many loving hearts about them. Notwithstanding her joy and trouble Ann forgot not her duty as "watchman," and threatened Uncle Christian when he would take more than he should of the good liquor. He, however, declared that this day was under the special favor of the Saints, and that no evil could in any wise befall him. My Forest-uncle and Master Pernhart had been found in discourse together, and the matter of which they spoke was my Cousin Götz. And how it gladdened the father to speak of his far-off son! More especially when Pernhart's lips overflowed with praise of the youth to whom his only child owed her early death.

Most marvellous of all was the *Magister*. Herdegen's return to his beloved robbed Master Peter of his last hope; nevertheless his eyes had never rested on her with fonder rapture. Verily his faithful heart was

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warmed as it were by the happiness which surrounded her as with a glory, and indeed it was not without some doubts that I saw the worthy man, who was wont to be so sober, raise his glass again and again to drink to Ann, whether she marked him or not, and drain his glass each time in her honor. My Uncle Christian likewise filled his cup right diligently, and seeing him quaff it with such lusty good will I feared lest he should keep us all night at table, when the time was short for Ann and my brother to have any privy speech together. But that good man forgot not, even over the wine-jar, what might pleasure other folks; and albeit it was hard for him to quit a merry drinking-bout he was the first to move away. We were alone by sundown. The *Magister* had been carried to bed and woke not till noon on the morrow.

The plighted couple sat once more in the oriel where they had so often sat in happier days, and seeing them talking and fondling in the gathering dusk, meseemed for a while that that glad winter season had come again in which they had rejoiced in the spring-tide of their love.

Thus the hours passed, and I was in the very act of enquiry whether it were not time to light the lamps, when we heard voices on the stairs, and Cousin Maud came in saying that Sir Franz had made his way into the house, and that he declared that his weal or woe, nay and his life lay in Herdegen's hand, so that she had not the heart to refuse to suffer him to come in. Hereupon my brother started up in a rage, but the

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chamber door was opened, and with the maid, who brought the lamp in, the Bohemian crossed the threshold. We maids would fain have quitted them; but the knight besought us to remain, saying, as his eyes humbly sued to mine, that rather should I tarry and speak a good word for him. Then, when Herdegen called upon him to speak, but did not hold forth his hand, Sir Franz besought him to suffer him to be his comrade in his pilgrimage. Howbeit so doleful a fellow was by no means pleasing in my brother's eyes, and so he right plainly gave him to understand; then the Bohemian called to mind their former friendship, and entreated him to put himself in his place and not to forget that he, as a man sound of limb, would have avenged the scorn put on him by Rochow in fair fight instead of with a dagger-thrust. They were condemned to a like penance and, if Herdegen would not suffer him and give him his company, this would be the death-blow to his blighted honor.

Hereupon I appealed to my brother right earnestly, beseeching him not to reject his former friend if it were only for love of me. And inasmuch as on that day his whole soul was filled with love, his hardness was softened, and how gladly and thankfully my heart beat when I beheld him give his hand to the man who had endured so much woe for my sake.

Presently, while they were yet speaking of their departing, again there were voices without; and albeit I could scarce believe my ears I mistook not, and knew the tones for Ursula's. Ann likewise heard and knew

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them, and she quitted the chamber saying: "None shall trouble me in such an hour, least of all shall Ursula!" The *angelus* had long since been tolled, and somehap of grave import must have brought us so rare a guest at so late an hour. My cousin, who would fain have hindered her from coming in, held her by the arm; and her efforts to shake off the old lady's grasp were all in vain till she caught sight of Herdegen. Then at length she freed herself and, albeit she was gasping for breath, her voice was one of sheer triumph as she cried: "I had to come, and here I am!"

"Aye, but if you come as a Mar-joy I will show you the way out, my word for that!" my cousin panted; but the maid heeded her not, but went straight toward Herdegen and said: "I felt I must see you once more ere you depart — I must! Old Jorg attended me, and when I am gone forth again Dame Maud will speak my *eulogium*. Only look at her! But it is all one to me. Find me a place, Herdegen, where I may speak with you and Ann Spiesz alone. I have a message for you."

Hereupon my cousin broke in with a scornful laugh, such as I could never have looked to hear from her, with her kind and single heart; and my brother told Ursula shortly and plainly that with her he had no more to do. To this she made answer that it would be a sin to doubt that, inasmuch as he was now a pious pilgrim and honorably betrothed, nevertheless she craved to see Ann. That, too, was denied her, and she did but shrug her shoulders; then she turned to the Bohemian, who

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had gone towards her, and asked him with icy politeness to remove from her presence, inasmuch as he was an offence to her. Hereupon I saw the last drop of red blood fade away from the young Knight's sickly cheek, and it went to my heart to see him uplift his hands and implore her right humbly: "You know, Ursula, all that hath befallen me for your sake, and how hard a lot awaits me. Three times have I been plighted to you, my promised bride, and as many times cast off . . . ."

"To spare you the like fate a fourth time; all good things being in threes!" she put in, mocking him. "Verily you have cured me of any desire ever to be your Dame, Sir Knight. And since meseems this day our speech is free and truthful, I am fain to confess that such a wish was ever far enough from me, and even when we stood betrothed. A strange thing is love! 'Here's to fair Margery!' one day, on every noble gentleman's lips; and on the morrow: 'Here's to sweet Ursula!' In some folks it grows inwardly, as it were a polypus, and of such, woe is me, am I. My love, if you would know the truth, my lord Baron von Welemisl, love such I have known I gave once for all to that man Herdegen Schopper; it has been his from the time when, in my short little skirts, I learnt to write; and so it has ever been, till the hour when worthy Dame Henneleinlein, the noble Junker's new cousin — it is enough to make one die of laughing! — when that illustrious lady whispered the truth in my ear that her intending kinsman had thrown me over,

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and, with me, old Im Hoff's wealth, for the sake of a scrivener's wench. And to think that as a boy he was wont to bring me posies, and wear my colors! Nay, and since that time he has shot many a fiery glance at me. Only lately he wrote to his uncle from Paris that he was minded to make me his wife. Ah, you may open your eyes wide, most respected every-one's-cousin Maud, and you likewise, prim and spotless Mistress Margery! Cross yourselves in the name of all the Saints! A dead wolf cannot bite, and as for my love for that man, I may boldly declare that it is dead and buried. But mark me," and she clapped her hand to her heaving bosom, "mark me, somewhat else hath made entrance here, with drums and trumpets and high jubilee: Hate! — I hate you, Herdegen, as I hate death, pestilence, and hell; and I hate you twice as much since your skill with the rapier brought the combat with the Brandenburger, into which I entrapped you, to so perverse an end."

Hereupon Cousin Maud, wild with rage herself, gripped her again by the arm to draw her forth from the chamber, but Ursula went on in a milder tone:

"Only a few moments longer, I pray you; for by the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints I swear that I would not have come hither at so late an hour but to deliver my message to Herdegen."

My cousin released her, and she drew forth a written paper and again enquired for Ann; howbeit my brother said that he did not purpose to call her in, and

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desired that she would give him the paper, if indeed it concerned him. To this she answered that he would presently know that much, inasmuch as it was her intent to read it to the company, only she would fain have had his fair mistress among the hearers. Howbeit she had a good loud voice, she thanked the Saints, and the doors in the Schoppers' house were scarce thicker than in other folks' houses. The letter in her hand had been given to her to deliver to Herdegen by the newly-made vicar of his Highness the Elector and Archbishop of Trèves, who was lodged with the Tetzels. He had not been able to find him, no more than the Emperor's men-at-arms; so he had bidden her take good heed that she gave it into Junker Schopper's own hand. But verily she would do yet more, and spare him the pains of reading it.

Hereupon my brother, in great ire, bid her no longer keep that which was not her own; yet she refused, and whereas Herdegen seized her hand to wrench away the paper she shrieked out to the Bohemian: "Give him his due, for a knave who offends maidens; that outcast for whom I scorned and misprized you! Help, help, if you are no churl!"

My brother nevertheless had already snatched the letter from her, and the Bohemian, who had laid his hand on his dagger, thought better of it as his eye met my look of warning.

It was a fearful moment of terror, and Ursula, whose hair had fallen loose, while her flashing blue eyes, full of hate, shot lightnings on one and another,

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stood clinging to the heavy dresser whereon our silver and glass vessels were displayed, and cried out as loudly as she could shout: "The letter is from his lady-love in Padua, the Marchesa Bianca Zorzi. That cunning swordsman's blade made her a widow, and now she bids him return to her embrace. The fond and ardent lady is in Venice, and her intent is to revel there in love and pleasure with her husband's murderer. And he — though he may have sworn a thousand vows to the scrivener's hussy — he will do the Italian Circe's bidding, and if he may escape her snares he will fall into those of another. Oh! I know him; and I feel in my soul that his fate will be to dally with one and another in delights and raptures, till the Saints fulfil my heart's chiefest desire, and he comes to despair and anguish and want, and the scrivener's wench breaks her heart under my very eyes with pining and sheer shame.— Away, away, Herdegen Schopper! Go forth to joy and to misery! Go — with your pale black-haired mate. Revel and wallow, till you, who have trampled on this heart's true love, are brought low — as loathsome in the eyes of men as a leper and a beggar."

And she shook the dresser so that the precious glass cup which the German merchants of the Fondaco at Venice had given to my father at his departing, fell to the floor and was broken to pieces with a loud crash.

We had hearkened to her ravings as though spell-bound and frozen; and when we at last took heart to

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put an end to her wild talk, lo, she was gone, and flying down the stairs with long strides.

Herdegen, who had turned pale, struggled to command himself. Cousin Maud, who had lost her breath with dismay, burst into loud weeping; the wild maid's curse had fallen heavy on her soul. I alone kept my senses, so far as to go to the window and look out at her. I saw her walking along, hanging her head; the serving man carried the lantern before her, and the Bohemian was speaking close in her ear.

When I came back into the chamber Cousin Maud had her arm round Herdegen, and was saying to him, with many tears, that the curse of the wicked had no power over a pious and faithful Christian; yet he quitted her in haste to seek Ann, who doubtless would have stayed in the next chamber, and perchance needed his succor Howbeit the door was opened, and we could scarce believe our eyes when she came in with that same roguish smile which she was wont to wear when, in playing hide-and-seek, she had stolen home past the seeker, and she cried: "Thank the Virgin that the air is clear once more! You may laugh, but in truth I fled up to the very garret for sheer dread of Mistress Tetzel. Did she come to fetch her bridegroom?"

Herdegen could not refrain from smiling at this question, and we likewise did the same; even Cousin Maud, who till this moment had sat on the couch like one crushed, with her feet stretched out before her, made a face and cried: "To fetch him! Ursula who

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has caught the Bohemian! She is a monster! Were ever such doings seen in our good town?—And her mother was so wise, so worthy a woman! And the hussy is but nineteen! — Merciful Father, what will she be at forty or fifty, when most women only begin to be wicked!" And thus she went on for some while.

Ere long we forgot Ursula and all the hateful to-do, and passed the precious hours in much content, till after midnight, when the Pernharts sent to fetch Ann home. Herdegen and I would walk with her. After a grievous yet hopeful leave-taking I came home again, leaning on his arm, through the cool autumn night.

When I now admonished Herdegen as we walked, as to the fair Marchesa and her letter, he declared to me that in those evil weeks he had spent in bitter yearning as a serving man in the bee-keeper's hut, he had learned to know his own mind. Neither the Marchesa, whom he scorned from the bottom of his heart, inasmuch as, with all her beauty, she was full of craft and lies, no, nor even Dame Venus herself could now turn him aside from the love and duty he had sworn to Ann. He would, indeed, take ship from Genoa rather than from Venice, were it not for shame of such fears of his own weakness, and that he longed once more to set eyes on our brother Kunz whom he had not seen for so long a space.

I found it hard to see clear in this matter. Yet could I not deem it wise to deny him the first chance of proving himself true and honest; likewise meseemed that our younger brother's presence would be a safe-

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guard against temptation. Under the eye of our parent's pictures I bid him good night for the few hours till he should depart, and when I pointed up to them he understood me, and clasped me fondly in his arms saying: "Never fear, little mother Margery!"

We were with Herdegen again or ever it was morning. While we had been sleeping he had written a loving letter to my grand-uncle, who had yesterday forbidden him his presence, to bear witness to his duty and thankfulness.

The cocks still were crowing in the yards, and the country-folk were coming into town with asses and waggons, when I mounted my horse to ride forth with my brother. He was busied in the courtyard with the new serving-man he had hired, by reason that Eppelein, who for safety's sake had not been suffered to go with him into hiding, had vanished as it were from the face of the earth. Nay, and we knew for what cause and reason, for Dame Henneleinlein had counselled the King's men to seize him, to the end that he might be put on the rack to give tidings of where his master lay hid. If they had caught him his stout limbs would have fared ill indeed; but the light-hearted varlet was a favorite with the serving men and wenches of the court-folk, jolly at the wine cup and all manner of sport, and thus they had bestowed him away. And so, while we were living from day to day in great fear, an old charcoal wife would come in from the forest twice or thrice in every week and bring charcoal to the kitchen wench to sell, and albeit she was ever sent

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away, yet would she come again and ask many questions.

While we were yet tarrying for Herdegen to be ready the old wife came by with her cart, and when she had asked of some needful matters she pulled off her kerchief with a loud laugh, and lo, in her woman's weed, there stood Eppelein and none other. Hereupon was much rejoicing and, in a few minutes, the crafty fellow was turned again into a sturdy riding man, albeit beardless.

Eppelein's return helped Cousin Maud over the grief of leave-taking. Yet, when at last we must depart, it went hard with her. At the gate we were met by the Pernharts with Ann and Uncle Christian. My lord the chief magistrate likewise was there, to bear witness to Herdegen's departing; also Heinrich Trardorf, his best beloved schoolmate, who had ever been his faithful friend.

We had left the walls and moat of the town far behind us, when we heard swift horses at our heels, and Sir Franz, with two serving-men, joined the fellowship. My brother had soon found a place at Ann's side, and we went forward at an easy pace; and if they were minded to kiss, bending from their saddles, they need fear no witness, for the autumn mist was so thick that it hid every one from his nearest neighbor.

Thus we went forth as far as Lichtenhof, and while we there made halt to take a last leave, meseemed that Heaven was fain to send us a friendly promise. The mist parted on a sudden as at the signal of a magician,

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and before us lay the city with its walls, and towers, and shining roofs, over-topped by the noble citadel. Thus we parted in better cheer than we had deemed we might, and the lovers might yet for a long space signal to each other by the waving of hat and of kerchief.

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CHAPTER VII.

HERDEGEN'S departing marks my life's way with another mile-stone. All fears about him were over, and a great peace fell upon me.

I had learnt by experience that it was within my power to be mistress of my heart's griefs, and I could tell myself that dull sufferance of woe would have ill-pleased him whose judgment I most cared for. To remember him was what I best loved, and I earnestly desired to guide my steps as would have been his wish and will. In some degree I was able to do so, and Ann was my great helper.

My eyes and ears were opened again to what should befall in the world in which my lover had lived; all the more so as matters now came about in the land and on its borders which deeply concerned my own dear home and threatened it with great peril.

After the Diet was broken up, the Elector Frederick of Brandenburg was forced to take patience till the princes, lords, and mounted men-at-arms sent forth by the townships, five or six from each, could muster at his bidding to pursue the Hussites in Bohemia. One year was thus idly spent; albeit the Bohemian rebels meanwhile could every day use their weapons, and

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instead of waiting to be attacked marched forward to attack. Certain troops of the heretics had already crossed the borders, and our good town had to strengthen its walls and dig its moat deeper to make ready for storm and siege. Or ever the Diet had met, many hands had already been at work on these buildings; and in these days every man soul in Nuremberg, from the boys even to the grey-haired men, wielded the spade or the trowel. Every serving-man in every household, whether artisan or patrician — and ours with the rest — was bound to toil at digging, and our fine young masters found themselves compelled to work in sun or rain, or to order the others; and it hurt them no more than it did the *Magister*, whose feebleness and clumsiness did the works less benefit than the labor did to his frail body.

Wheresoever three men might be seen in talk, for sure it was of state-matters, and mostly of the Hussites. At first it would be of the King's message of peace; of the resistance made by the Elector Palatine, Ludwig, in the matter of receiving the ecclesiastical Elector of Mainz as Vicar-general of the Empire; of the same reverend Elector's loss of dignity at Boppard, and of the delay and mischief that must follow. Then it was noised abroad that the Margrave Frederick of Meissen, who now held the lands of the late departed Elector Albrecht of Saxony in fief from the King, and whose country was a strong bulwark against the Bohemians, was about to put an end to the abomination of heresy. Howbeit, neither he nor Duke Albrecht of Austria did

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aught to any good end against the foe; and matters went ill enough in all the Empire.

The Electors assembled at Bingen made great complaints of the King tarrying so far away, and with reason; and when he presently bid them to a Diet at Vienna they would not obey. The message of peace was laughed to scorn; and how much blood was shed to feed the soil of the realm in many and many a fight!

And what fate befell the army whereon so great hopes had been set? The courage and skill of the leader were all in vain; the vast multitude of which he was captain was made up of over many parts, all unlike, and each with its own chief; and the fury of the heretics scattered them abroad. Likewise among our peaceful citizens there was no small complaining, and with good cause, that a King should rule the Empire whose Realm of Hungary, with the perils that beset it from the Ottoman Turks, the Bohemians, and other foes, so filled his thoughts that he had neither time, nor mind, nor money to bestow due care on his German States. His treasury was ever empty; and what sums had the luckless war with Venice alone swallowed up! He had not even found the money needful to go to Rome to be crowned Emperor. He had failed to bring the contentious Princes of the Empire under one hat, so to speak; and whereas his father, Charles IV., had been called the Arch-stepfather of the German Empire, Sigismund, albeit a large-hearted, shrewd, and unresting soul, deserved a scarce better name, inasmuch as that he, like the former

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sovereign, when he fell heir to his Bohemian father-land, knew not how to deal even with that as a true father should.

Not a week passed after Herdegen's departing but a letter by his own hand came to Ann, and all full of faithful love. I, likewise, had, not so long since, had such letters from another, and so it fell that these, which brought great joy to Ann, did but make my sore heart ache the more. And when I would rise from table silent and with drooping head, the *Magister* would full often beg leave to follow me to my chamber, and comfort me after his own guise. In all good faith would he lay books before my eyes, and strive to beguile me to take pleasure in them as the best remedy against heaviness of soul. The lives of the mighty heathen, as his Plutarch painted them, would, he said, raise even a weak soul to their greatness and the *Consolatio Philosophiae* of Boëtius would of a surety refresh my stricken heart. Howbeit, one single well-spent hour in life, or one toilsome deed fruitful for good, hath at all times brought me better comfort than a whole pile of pig-skin-covered tomes. Yet have certain verses of the Scripture, or some wise and verily right noble maxim from the writings of the Greeks or Latins dropped on my soul now and again as it were a grain of good seed.

Sad to tell, those first letters from Herdegen, all dipped in sunshine, were followed by others which could but fill us with fears. The pilgrims had been over-long in getting so far as Venice, by reason that

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Sir Franz had fallen sick after they had passed the Brenner, and my brother had diligently and faithfully tended him. Thus it came to pass that another child of Nuremberg, albeit setting forth after them, passed them by; and this was Ursula Tetzel, whose father deemed it well to send her forth from the city, where, of a truth, the ground had waxed too hot for her, inasmuch as she had given cause for two bloody frays; and Cousin Maud, to be sure, had not kept silence as to her unbridled demeanor in our house.

Now Mistress Mendel, her aunt, had many years ago gone to the city of St. Mark, and albeit it was there against the laws for a noble to marry with a stranger maiden, she had long since by leave of the Republic, become the wife of Filippo Polani, with whom she was still living in much ease and honor. In Augsberg, in Ulm, and in Frankfort, there were many noble families of the Tetzels' kith and kin, yet she had chosen to go to this aunt in Venice; and doubtless the expectation of meeting Herdegen there, whether in love or hate, had had its weight with her.

Thus it came to pass that she found him at Brixen, where he tarried with the sick knight; and he wrote that, as it fell, he had had more to do with her and her father than he had cared for, and that in a strange place many matters were lightly smoothed over, whereas at home walls and moats would have parted them; nay, that in Italy the Nuremberger would even call a man of Cologne his countryman.

For my part, I could in no wise conceive how those

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two should ever more speak a kind word to each other, and this meeting in truth pleased me ill. Howbeit, his next letter gave us better cheer. He had then seen Kunz, meeting him right joyfully, and was lodged in the Fondaco, the German Merchants' Hall, where likewise Kunz had his own chamber.

Herdegen's next letter from Venice brought us the ill tidings that the plague had broken out, and that he could find no fellowship to travel with him, by reason that, so long as the sickness raged in Venice, her vessels would not be suffered to cast anchor in any seaport of the Levant. And a great fear came over me, for our dear father had fallen a prey to that evil.

In his third or fourth letter our pilgrim told us, with somewhat of scorn, that the Marchesa Zorzi, who had in fact removed thither from Padua, and had made friends with Ursula in the house of Filippo Polani, had bidden him to wait on her, by one of her pages; yet might he be proud—he said—of the high-handed and steadfast refusal he had returned, once for all. In truth I was moved to deeper fears by what both my brothers wrote of the black barges, loaded to the gunwale with naked corpses, which stole along the canals in the silent night, to cast forth their dreadful freight in the grave yards on the shore, or into the open sea. The plague was raging nigh to the Fondaco, and my two brothers were living in the midst of the dead; nay, and Ann knew that Ursula would not depart from her lover, although the Palazzo Polani, where she had found lodging, lay hard by the Fondaco.

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Yet, hard as as it is to conceive of it, never had the music sounded with noisier delights in the dancing-halls of Venice, nor had the money been more lightly tossed from hand-to-hand over the gaming-tables, nor, at any time, had there been hotter love-making. It must be that each one was minded to enjoy, in the short space of life that might yet be his, all the delights of long years.—And foremost of these was the Marchesa Bianca Zorzi.

As for Herdegen, not long did he brook the narrow chambers of the Fondaco-house; driven forth by impatience and heart-sickness, from morning till night he was in his boat, or on the grand *Piazza*, or on the watery highways; and inasmuch as he ever fluttered to where ladies of rank and beauty were to be found, as a moth flies to the light, that evil woman was ever in his path, day after day, and whensoever her hosts would suffer it, Ursula would be with her. Nay, and the German maiden, who had learned better things of the Carthusian sisters, was not ashamed to aid and abet that sinful Italian woman. Thus my brother was in great peril lest Ursula's prophecy should be fulfilled by his own fault. Indeed he already had his foot in the springe, inasmuch as that he could not say nay to the Marchesa's bidding that he would go to her house on her name-day. It was a higher power that came betwixt them, vouchsafing him merciful but grievous repentance; the plague, Death's unwearied executioner, snatched the fair, but sinful lady, from among the living.

Ursula lamented over her as though it were her own

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sister that had died; and it seemed that the Marchesa was fain to keep up the bond that had held them together even beyond the grave, for it was at her funeral that the son of one of the oldest and noblest families of the Republic first saw Mistress Ursula Tetzel, and was fired with love for the maiden. She had many a time been seen abroad with the Marchesa, or with the Polanis, and the young gentlemen of the Signoria, the painters, and the poets, had marked her well; the natural golden hue of her hair was an amazement and a delight to the Italians; indeed many a black-haired lady and common hussy would sit on her roof vainly striving to take the color out of her own locks. It was the same with her velvet skin, which even at Nuremberg had many a time brought to men's minds the maid in the tale of "Snow-white and Rose-red."

Thus it fell that Anselmo Guistiniani had heard of her during the lifetime of his cousin the Marchesa Zorzi, while he was absent from Venice on state matters. And when he beheld her with his own eyes among the mourners, there was an end to his peace of heart; he forthwith set himself to win her for his own. Howbeit Ursula met her noble suitor with icy coldness, and when he and Herdegen came together at the Palazzo Polani, where she was lodging, she made as though she saw my lord not at all, and had no eyes nor ears save for my brother; till it was more than Guistinani would bear, and he abruptly departed. Herdegen's letter, which told us all these things, was full of kindly pity for the fair and hapless damsel who had de-

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meaned herself so basely towards him, by reason that her fiery love had turned her brain, and that she still was pining for him to whom she had ever been faithful from her childhood up. She had freely confessed as much even under the very eyes of so lordly a suitor as Anselmo Giustiniani; and albeit Ann might be sure of his constancy, even in despite of Ursula, yet would he not deny that he could forgive Ursula much in that she had loved much, as the Scripture saith. Every shadow of danger for him was gone and overpast; he had already bid Ursula farewell, and was to ride forth next morning to Genoa, leaving the plague-stricken city behind him, and would take ship there. It was well indeed that he should be departing, inasmuch as yestereve, when he bid Ursula good night, Giustiniani had given him to understand that he, Herdegen, was in his way; at home he would have shown his teeth, and with good right, to any man who had dared to speak to him, but in Venice every man who lodged in the Fondaco was forbid the use of weapons, and he had heard tell of Anselmo Giustiniani that he, unlike the rest of his noble race, who were benevolent men and patrons of learning, albeit he was a prudent statesman and serviceable to the city, was a stern and violent man. This much in truth a man might read in his gloomy black eyes; and many a stranger, for all he were noble and a Knight, who had fallen out with a Venetian *Signor* of his degree had vanished forever, none knew whither.

As we read these words the blood faded from Ann's

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cheek; but I set my teeth, for I may confess that Herdegen's ways and words roused my wrath. In Ann's presence I could, to be sure, hide my ire; but when I was alone I struck my right fist into my left hand and asked of myself whether a man or a woman were the vainer creature? For what was it that still drew my brother to that maid who had ever pursued him and the object of his love with cruel hate — so strongly, indeed, that he would have been ready to cherish and comfort her — but joy at finding himself — a mere town-bred Junker — preferred above that grand nobleman? For my part, I plainly saw that Ursula was playing the same game again as she had carried on here with Herdegen and the Brandenburger. She spoke the man she hated fair before the jealous Marchese, only to rouse that potent noble's fury against my brother.

After all this my heart rejoiced when we received Herdegen's first letter written from Genoa, nay, on board of the galleon which was to carry him, Sir Franz and Eppelein to Cyprus. In this he made known that he had departed from Venice without let or hindrance, and he bid us farewell with such good cheer, and love, and hope, that Ann and I forgot and forgave with all our hearts everything that had made us wroth. This last greeting came as a fragrant love-posy, and it helped us to think of Herdegen's long pilgrimage as he himself did — as of a ride forth to the Forest. From this letter we were likewise aware that he had never known what peril he had escaped; for ere long I learned from Kunz that paid assassins had fallen on him the very

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next evening after Herdegen's departing, in the crooked street called of Saint Chrysostom, at the back part of the German Merchants' House; yea, and they would easily have overpowered him but that certain great strong Tyrolese bale-packers of the Fondaco came to his succor or ever it was too late. And it was right certain that these murderers were in Giustiniani's pay, and in the dusk had taken Kunz for his brother, who was somewhat like him. The younger had come off unharmed by the special mercy of the Saints, but it might well have befallen that, as of old in his schooldays, he should have borne the penalty for Herdegen's misdoings. And whereas I mind me here of the many ways in which my eldest brother prospered and got the best of it over the younger, and of other like cases, meseems it is the lot of certain few to suffer others, not their betters, to stand in their sun, and eat the fruit that has ripened on their trees.

Howbeit, Herdegen had by good hap escaped a sharp fray; and when Ann and I, kneeling side by side in Saint Laurence's church, had offered up a thanksgiving from the bottom of our hearts, meseemed we were as some Captain who sings *Te Deum* after a victory.

Yet, as ofttimes in the month of May, when for a while the sun hath shone with summer heat and glory, there comes a gloomy time with dark days and sharp frost at nights, so did we deem the long space which followed after that glad and pious church-going. Days grew to weeks and weeks to months and we had no

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tidings, no word from our pilgrims, for good or for evil.

Verily it was well-nigh a comfort and a help when those who were on the look-out, Kunz and other friends, gave it as certain tidings that the galleon which was carrying Herdegen to Cyprus, and which belonged to the Lomellini of Genoa, had been lost at sea. Saracen pirates, so it was told, had seized the ship; but further tidings were not to be got, as to what had befallen the crew and the travellers, albeit Kunz forthwith betook himself to Genoa and the Fütterers, who had a house and trade of their own there, did all they might to find their traces. The eldest and the finest link of the Schopper chain had, we deemed, been snatched away, peradventure for ever; the death of her lover had made life henceforth bitter to the third and least, and only the middle one, Kunz, remained unhurt and still such as it might have gladdened his parents' hearts to behold him. Thus I deemed, at least, when after long parting I set eyes on him once more, a goodly man, tall and of a fair countenance. All that had ever been good and worthy in him had waxed and sped well at Venice, that high school of the merchant class; but where was the smiling mirthfulness which had marked him as a youth? The same earnest calm shone in his wise and gentle gaze, and rang in the deep voice he had now gotten.

My grand-uncle had esteemed him but lightly, so long as Herdegen was his delight; but whereas Kunz had done good service at Venice and the master of the

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Im Hoff house there was dead, and our guardian himself, on whom a grievous sickness had fallen, gave himself up day and night to meet his end, he had, little by little, given over the whole business of the trade to his young nephew; thus it came to pass that Kunz, when he was but just twenty, was called upon to govern matters such as are commonly trusted only to a man of ripe years. But his power and wisdom grew with the weight of his burthens. Whether it were at Nuremberg or at Venice, he was ever early to rise and ready, if need should be, to give up his night's rest, sitting over his desk or travelling at great speed; and he seemed to have no eyes nor ears for the pleasures of youth. Or ever he was four and twenty I found the first white hair in his brown locks. Many there were who deemed that the uncommon graveness of his manners came of the weight of care which had been laid on him so young, and verily not without reason; yet my sister's heart was aware of another cause. When I chanced to see his eye rest on Ann, I knew enough; and it was a certainty that I had not erred in my thought, when old Dame Pernhart one day in his presence spoke of Ann as her poor, dear little widow, and the blood mounted to his brow.

I would fain have spoken a word of warning to Ann when she would thank him with heartfelt and sisterly love for all the pains he had been at, with steadfast patience, to find any token of our lost brother. And how fair was the forlorn bride in these days of waiting and of weary unsatisfied longing!

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Poor Kunz! Doubtless he loved her; and yet he neither by word nor deed gave her cause to guess his heart's desire. When, at about this time, old Hans Tucher died, one of the worthiest and wisest heads of the town and the council, Kunz gave Ann for her name-day a prayer-book with the old man's motto, which he had written in it for Kunz's confirmation, which was as follows:

"God ruleth all things for the best
And sends a happy end at last."

And Ann took the gift right gladly; and more than once when, after some disappointment, my spirit sank, she would point to the promise "And sends a happy end at last."

Whereupon I would look up at her, abashed and put to shame; for it is one thing not to despair, and another to trust with steadfast confidence on a happy outcome. She, in truth, could do this; and when I beheld her day by day at her laborious tasks, bravely and cheerfully fulfilling the hard and bitter exercises which her father-confessor enjoined, to the end that she might win the favor of the Saints for her lover, I weened that the Apostle spake the truth when he said that love hopeth all things and believeth all things.

Notwithstanding it was not easy to her, nor to us, to hold fast our confidence; now and again some trace of the lost man would come to light which, so soon as Kunz followed it up, vanished in mist like a jack-o'-

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lantern. And often as he failed he would not be overweary; and once, when he was staying at Nuremberg and tidings came from Venice that a certain German who might be Herdegen was dwelling a slave at Joppa, he made ready to set forth for that place to ransom him forthwith. My grand-uncle, who in the face of death was eagerly striving to win the grace of Heaven by good works, suffered him to depart, and at my entreaty he took my squire Akusch with him, inasmuch as he could still speak Arabic, which was his mother-tongue. Likewise I besought Kunz to make it his care to restore the lad to his people, if it should befall that he might find them, albeit hitherto we had made enquiry for them in vain. This he promised me to do; yet, often as that good youth had longed to see his native land once more, and much as he had talked in praise of its hot sun, in our cold winter seasons, it went hard with the good lad to depart from us; and when he took leave of me he could not cease from assuring me that in his own land he would do all that in him lay to find the brother of his beloved mistress.

Thus they fared forth to the Levant; and this once again we were doomed to vain hopes. Kunz found not him he sought, but a wild Swiss soldier who had fallen into the hands of the Saracens. Him he ransomed, as being a Christian man, for a small sum of money; and as for Akusch he left him at Joppa, whereas his folk were Egyptians and he deemed he had found some track of them there.

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Kunz did not go thither with him, inasmuch as in Alexandria all had been done that might be done to discover and ransom a Frankish captive. Nor was Akusch idle there, and moreover fate had brought another child of Nuremberg to that place.

Ursula had become the wife of the Marchese Anselmo Giustiniani, by special favor of the great council, and had come with him to Egypt, whither he was sent by the Republic as Consul. There she now dwelt with her noble lord, and in many letters to my grand-uncle she warmly declared to him that, so far as in her lay, all should be done to discover where the lover of her youth might be. Her husband was the most powerful Frank in all the Sultan's dominions, and it was a joy to her to see with what diligence he made search for the lost youth. Herdegen, indeed, had ill-repaid her childish love, yet she knew of no nobler revenge than to lay him under the debt of thanks to her and her husband for release and ransom. These words doubtless came from the bottom of her heart; she were no true woman if she could not forgive a man in misfortune for the sins of a happier time. And above all she was ever of a rash and lawless mind, and truthful even to the scorn of modesty and good manners, rather than crafty and smooth of tongue.

Yet she likewise failed to find the vanished wanderer, and the weeks and months grew to be years while we waited in vain. It was on the twenty-second day of March in the second twelve month after Herdegen's departing that the treasures of the realm, and

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among them a nail from the Cross and the point of the spear wherewith they pierced the Lord's side, were to be brought into the town in a solemn procession, and I, with many others, rode forth to meet it. They were brought hither from Blindenberg on the Danube, and the Emperor sent them in token of his grace, that we might hold them in safe keeping within our strong walls. They had been brought thus far right privily, under the feint that the waggon wherein they were carried bore wine vats, and a great throng gathered with shouts of joy to hail these precious things. Prisoners were set free in honor of their coming; and for my own part I mind the day full well, by reason that I put off my black mourning weed and went forth in a colored holiday garb for the first time in a long while.

If I had, in truth, been able by good courage to shake off in due time the oppressing weight of my grief, I owed it in no small measure to the forest — whither we went forth, now as heretofore, to sojourn in the spring and autumn seasons — and to its magic healing. How many a time have I rested under its well-known trees and silently looked back on the past. And, when I mind me of those days, I often ask myself whether the real glad times themselves or those hours of calmer joy in remembrance were indeed the better.

As I sat in the woods, thinking and dreaming, there was plenty for the eye to see and the ear to hear. The clouds flew across in silence, and the soft green at my feet, with all that grew on tree and bush, in the grass, and by the brink of the pool, made up a peaceful

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world, innocently fair and full of precious charm. Here there was nought to remind me of the stir of mankind, with its haste and noise and fighting and craving, and that was a delight; nor did the woodland sounds. — The song of birds, the hum of chafers and bees, the whisper of leaves, and all the rush and rustle of the forest were its mother-tongue.

Yet, not so! There was in truth one human soul of whom I was ever minded while thinking and dreaming in these woods through whom I had first known the joy of loving, and that was the youth whose home was here, for whose return my aunt longed day and night, whose favorite songs I was ever bidden to sing to my uncle when he would take the oars in his strong old hands of an evening, and row us on the pool — he who peradventure had long since followed my lover, and was dead in some far-off land.

Ann, who was ever diligent, took less pleasure in idle dreaming; she would ever carry a book or some broidery in her hand. Or she would abide alone with my aunt; and whereas my aunt now held her to be her fellow in sorrow, and might talk with her of the woe of thinking of the dearest on earth as far away and half lost, they grew closer to each other, and there was bitter grief when our duty took us back to the town once more. At home likewise Herdegen was ever in our minds, nevertheless the sunshine was as bright and the children's faces as dear as heretofore, and we could go about the tasks of the hour with fresh spirit.

If now and again grief cast a darker shade over

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Ann, still the star of Hope shone with more comfort for her than for me and Cousin Maud; and it was but seldom that you might mark that she had any sorrow. Truly there were many matters besides her every-day duties, and her errands within and without the house, to beguile her of her fears for her lost lover. First of all there came her stepfather's brother, his Eminence Cardinal Bernhardi — for to this dignity had his Holiness raised the Bishop — from Rome to Nuremberg, where he lodged in the house of his fathers. Now this high prelate was such a man as I never met the like of, and his goodly face, beardless indeed, but of a manly brown, with its piercing, great eyes, I weened was as a magic book, having the power to compel others, even against their will, to put forth all that was in them of grace and good gifts. Yet was he not grave nor gloomy, but of a happy cheer, and ready to have his jest with us maidens; only in his jests there would ever be a covert intent to arouse thought, and whensoever I quitted his company I deemed I had profited somewhat in my soul.

He likewise vouchsafed the honor of knowing him to the *Magister;* and whereas he brought tidings of certain Greek *Manuscripts* which had been newly brought into Italy, Master Peter came home as one drunk with wine, and could not forbear from boasting how he had been honored by having speech with such a pearl among *Humanists.*

My lord Cardinal was right well pleased to see his home once more; but what he loved best in it was

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Ann. Nay, if it had lain with him, he would have carried her to Rome with him. But for all that she was fain to look up to such a man with deep respect, and wait lovingly on his behests, yet would she not draw back from the duty she had taken upon her to care for her brothers and sisters, and chiefly for the deaf and dumb boy. And she deemed likewise that she was as a watchman at his post; it was at Nuremberg that all was planned for seeking Herdegen, and hither must the first tidings come that could be had of him. The old grand dame also was more than ever bound up in her, and so soon as my lord Cardinal was aware that it would greatly grieve his old mother to lose her he renounced his desire.

As for me, I was dwelling in a right happy life with Cousin Maud; never had I been nearer to her heart. So long as she conceived that her comforting could little remedy my woe, she had left me to myself; and as soon as I was fain to use my hands again, and sing a snatch as I went up and down the house, meseemed her old love bloomed forth with double strength. Meseemed I could but show her my thankfulness, and my ear and heart were at all times open when she was moved to talk of her best-beloved Herdegen, and reveal to me all the wondrous adventures he had gone through in her imagination. And this befell most evenings, from the hour when we unclothed till long after we had gone to rest; and I was fain to keep my eyes open while, for the twentieth time, she would expound to me her far-fetched visions: that the Mame-

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lukes of Egypt, who were all slaves and whose Sultan was chosen from among themselves, had of a surety set Herdegen on the throne, seeing him to be the goodliest and noblest of them all. And perchance he would not have refused this honor if he might thereby turn them from their heathenness and make of them good Christians. Nay, nor was it hard for her to fancy Ann arrayed in silk and gems as a Sultana. And then, when I fell asleep in listening to these fancies, which she loved to paint in every detail, behold my dreams would be of Turks and heathen; and of bloody battles by land and sea.

No man may tell his dreams fasting; but as soon as I had eaten my first mouthful she would bid me tell her all, to the veriest trifle, and would solemnly seek the interpretation of every vision.

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CHAPTER VIII.

My lord Cardinal had departed from Nuremberg some long while, by reason that he was charged by his holiness the Pope with a mission which took him through Cologne and Flanders to England. Inasmuch as he was not suffered to have Ann herself in his company, he conceived the wish to possess her likeness in a picture; and he sent hither to that end a master of good fame, of the guild of painters in Venice. We owed this good limner thanks for many a pleasant hour. Sir Giacomo Bellini was a youth of right merry wit, knowing many Italian ditties, and who made good pastime for us while we sat before him; for I likewise must be limned, inasmuch as Cousin Maud would have it so, and the painter's eye was greatly pleased by my yellow hair.

Whereas he could speak never a word of German, it was our part to talk with him in Italian, and this exercise to me came not amiss. Also I could scarce have had a better master to teach me than Giacomo Bellini, who set himself forthwith to win my heart and turn my head; nay, and he might have done so, but that he confessed from the first that he had a fair young wife in Venice, albeit he was already craving for some new love.

Thus through him again I learned how light a

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touch is needed to overthrow a man's true faith; and when I minded me of Herdegen and Ann, and of this Giacomo — who was nevertheless a goodly and well-graced man — and his young wife, meseemed that the woman who might win the love of a highly-gifted soul must ofttimes pay for that great joy with much heaviness and heartache.

Howbeit, I mind me in right true love of the mirthful spirit and manifold sportiveness which marked our fellowship with the Italian limner; and after that I had once given him plainly and strongly to understand that the heart of a Nuremberg damsel was no light thing or plaything, and her very lips a sanctuary which her husband should one day find pure, all went well betwixt us.

The picture of Ann, the first he painted, showed her as Saint Cecelia hearkening to music which sounds from Heaven in her ears. Two sweet angel babes floated on thin clouds above her head, singing hymns to a mandoline and viol. Thus had my lord Cardinal commanded, and the work was so excellent that, if the Saint herself vouchsafed to look down on it out of Heaven, of a certainty it was pleasing in her eyes.

As to mine own presentment; at first I weened that I would be limned in my peach-colored brocade gown with silver dolphins thereon, by reason that I had worn that weed in the early morn after the dance, when Hans spoke his last loving farewell at the door of our house. But whereas one cold day I went into Master Giacomo's work-chamber in a red hood and a green

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cloak bordered with sable fur, he would thenceforth paint me in no other guise. At first he was fain to present me as going forth to church; then he deemed that he might not show forth my very look and seeming if I were limned with downcast head and eyes. Therefor he gave me the falcon on my hand which had erewhile been my lover's gift. My eyes were set on the distance as though I watched for a heron; thus I seemed in truth like one hunting — "chaste Diana," quoth the painter, minding him of the reproofs I had given him so often. But it would be a hard task to tell of all the ways whereby the painter would provoke me to reprove him. When the likeness was no more than half done, he painted his own merry face to the falcon on my wrist gazing up at me with silly languor. Thereupon, when he presently quitted us, I took the red chalk and wrote his wife's name on a clear place in front of the face and beneath it the image of a birch rod; and on the morrow he brought with him a right pleasant *Sonnet*, which I scarce had pardoned had he not offered it so humbly and read it in so sweet a voice. And, being plainly interpreted, it was as follows:

"Upon Olympus, where the gods do dwell
Who with almighty will rule earth and heaven,
Lo! I behold the chiefest of them all:
Jove, on his throne with Juno at his side.
A noble wedded pair. In all the world
The eye may vainly seek nor find their like.
The nations to his sanctuary throng,
And kings, struck dumb, cast down their golden crowns.

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"Yet even these are not for ever one.
The god flies from the goddess. — And a swan
Does devoir now, the slave of Leda's charms.

"Thus I behold the beams of thy bright eye,
And bid my home farewell, — I, hapless wight,
Fly like the god, fair maid, to worship thee!"

Albeit I suffered him to recite these lines to the end I turned from him with a countenance of great wrath, and tore the paper whereon they were writ in two halves which I flung behind the stove. Nor did I put away my angry and offended mien until he had right humbly besought my forgiveness. Yet when I had granted it, and he presently quitted the chamber, I did, I confess, gather up the torn paper and bestow it in my girdle-poke. Nay, meseems that I had of intent rent it only in twain, to the end that I might the better join it again. Thus to this day it lieth in my chest, with other relics of the past; yet I verily believe that another *Sonnet*, which Sir Giacomo found on the morrow, laid on his easel, was not so treasured by him. It was thus:

"There was one Hans, and he was fain to try,
Like to Olympian Jove, the magic arts
Of witchcraft upon some well-favored maid.
Bold the adventure, but the prize how sweet!
'Farewell, good wife,' quoth he, 'Or e'er the dawn
Hath broke I must be forward on my way.
Like Jupiter I will be blessed and bless
With love; and in the image of a swan.'"

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"The magic spell hath changed him. With a wreath
About his head he deems he lacketh nought
Of what may best beguile a maiden's soul.

"Thus to fair Leda flies the hapless wight. —
With boisterous mirth the dame beholds the bird.
'A right fine goose! Thou'lt make a goodly roast.'"

Howbeit Giacomo would not leave this verse without reply; and to this day, if you look close into the picture, you may see a goose's head deep in shade among the shrubs in the back part of it, but clearly to be discerned.

Notwithstanding many such little quarrels we liked each other well, and I may here note that when, in the following year, which was the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and twenty-six, a little son was born to him, since grown to be a right famous painter, known as Giambellini — which is to say Giovanni, or Hans,* Bellini, I, Margery Schopper, stood his sponsor at the font. Yea and I was ever a true godsib to him, and that painter might indeed thank my kith and kin when he was charged with a certain office in the Fondaco in Venice, which is worth some hundreds of ducats yearly to him, to this day.

Thus were the portraits ended, and when I behold my own looking from the wide frame with so mirthful and yet so longing a gaze, meseems that Giacomo must have read the book of my soul and have known right

* John.

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well how to present that he saw therein; at that time in truth I was a happy young creature, and the aching and longing which would now and again come over me, in part for him who was gone, and in part I wist not for what, were but the shadow which must ever fall where there is light. And verily I had good cause to be thankful and of good cheer; I was in health as sound as a trout in the brook, and had good chances for making the most of those humble gifts and powers wherewith I was blessed.

As to Herdegen, it was no small comfort to us to learn that my lord Cardinal Bernhardi had taken that matter in hand, and had bidden all the priests and friars in the Levant to make enquiry for tidings of him.

The good prelate was to be nine months journeying abroad, and whereas five months were now spent we were rejoicing in hope of his homecoming; but there was one in Nuremberg who looked for it even more eagerly than we did, and that was my grand-uncle Im Hoff. The old knight had, as I have said, done us thankworthy service as our guardian; yet had he never been dear to me, and I could not think of him but with silent wrath. Howbeit he was now in so sad and cruel a plight that a heart of stone must have melted to behold him. Thus pity led me to him, although it was a penance to stay in his presence. The old Baron, —for of this title likewise he could boast, since he had poured a great sum into the Emperor's treasury, — this old man, who of yore had but feigned a false and evil show of repentance — as that

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he would on certain holy days wash the feet of beggar folk who had first been cleansed with care, now in sickness and the near terror of death was in terrible earnest, and of honest intent would fain open the gates of Heaven by pious exercises. He had to be sure at the bidding of Master Ulsenius the leech, exchanged the coffin wherein he had been wont to sleep for a common bedstead of wood; yet in this even he might get no rest, and was fain to pass his sleepless nights in his easy chair, resting his aching feet in a cradle which, with his wonted vain-glory, he caused to be made of the shape and color of a pearl shell. But his nights in the coffin, and mockery of death, turned against him; he had ever been pale, and now he wore the very face of a corpse. The blood seemed frozen in his veins, and he was at all times so cold that the great stove and the wide hearth facing him were fed with mighty logs day and night.

In this fearful heat the sweat stood on my brow so soon as I crossed the threshold, and if I tarried in the chamber I soon lacked breath. The sick man's speech was scarce to be heard, and as to all that Master Ulsenius told us of the seat of his ill, and of how it was gnawing him to death I would fain be silent. Instead of that Lenten mockery of the foot washing he now would do the hardest penance, and there was scarce a saint in the Calendar to whom he had not offered gifts or ever he died.

A Dominican friar was ever in his chamber, telling the rosary for him and doing him other ghostly service,

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especially in the night season, when he was haunted by terrible restlessness. Nothing eased him as a remedy against this so well as the presence of a woman to his mind. But of all those to whom, on many a Christmas eve, he had made noble gifts, few came a second time after they had once been in that furnace; or, if they did, it would be no more than to come and depart forthwith. Cousin Maud could endure to stay longest with him; albeit afterwards she would need many a glass of strong waters to strengthen her heart.

As for me, each time when I came home from my grand-uncle's with pale cheeks she would forbid me ever to cross his threshold more: but when his bidding was brought me she likewise was moved to compassion, and suffered me to obey.

Nevertheless, if I had not been more than common strong, thank the Saints, long sitting with the sick man would of a certainty have done me a mischief, for body and soul had much to endure. Meseemed that pain had loosened the tongue of that hitherto wordless old man, and whereas he had ever held his head high above all men, he would now abase himself before the humblest. He would stay any man or woman who would tarry, to tell of all his sufferings, and of what he endured in mind and body. His confessor had indeed forbidden him to complain of the evil wherewith Heaven had punished him, but none could hinder him from bewailing the evil he had committed in his sinfulness and vanity. And his self-accusings were so mani-

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fold and fearful, that I was fain to believe his declaration that all he had ever thought or done that was good was, as it were, buried; and that nought but the ill he had suffered and committed was left and still had power over him. The death-stroke he had dealt all unwittingly, in heedless passion, rose before his soul day and night as an accursed and bloody deed; and every moment embittered by his wife's unfaith, even to the last hour when, on her death-bed, she cursed him, he lived through again, night after night. Whereupon he would clasp his thin hands, through which you might see the light, over his tear-stained face and would not be still or of better cheer till I could no longer hide my own great grief for him.

Howbeit, when I had heard the same tale again and again it ceased from touching me so deeply; so that at last, instead of such deep compassion, it moved me only to dull gloom and, I will confess, to unspeakable weariness. The tears came not to my eyes, and the only use for my kerchief was to hide my yawning and *vinaigrette*. Thus it fell that the old penitent took no pleasure in my company, and at last weeks might pass while he bid me not to his presence.

Now, when the pictures were ended, whereas he heard that they were right good likenesses, and moreover was told that my lord Cardinal was minded to come home within no long space, he fell into a strange tumult and desired to behold those pictures both of me and of Ann. At this I marvelled not: he had long since learned to think of Councillor Pernhart's step-

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daughter in all kindness; nay, he had desired me to beg her to forgive a dying old man. We were well-disposed to do his will, and the Pernharts no less; on a certain Wednesday the pictures were carried to his house, and on the morrow, being Thursday, I would go and know whether he were content. And behold my likeness was set in a corner where he scarce could see it; but that of Ann was face to face with him and, as I entered the chamber, his eyes were fixed thereon as though ravished by the vision of a Saint from Heaven. And he was so lost in thought that he looked not away till the Dominican Brother spoke to him.

Thereupon he hastily greeted me, and went on to ask of me whether I duly minded that he had been a faithful and thankworthy guardian. And when I answered yes he whispered to me, with a side-look at the friar, that of a surety my lord Cardinal must hold Ann full dear, if he would bid so famous a master to Nuremberg that he might possess her image. Now inasmuch as I wist not yet to what end he sought to beguile me by these questions, I confirmed his words with all prudence; and then he glanced again at the monk, and whispered hastily in my ear, and so low that I scarce might hear him:

"That fellow is privily drinking up all my old Cyprus wine and *Malvoisie*. And the other priests, the *Plebian* here — do you know their worldly and base souls? They take up no cross, neither mortify the flesh by holy fasting, but cherish and feed it as the lost heathen do. Are they holy men following in the foot-

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steps of the Crucified Lord? All that brings them to me is a care for my oblations and gifts. I know them, I know them all, the whole lot of them here in Nuremberg. As the city is, so are the pastors thereof! Which of them all mortifies himself? Is there any high court held here? To win the blessing of a truly lordly prelate, a man must journey to Bamberg or to Würzburg. Of what avail with the Blessed Virgin and the Saints are such as these ruddy friars? Fleischmann, Hellfeld, nay the Dominican prior himself — what are they? Why, at the Diet they walked after the Bishop of Chiemsee and Eichstadt. In the matters of the city — its rights, alliances, and dealings — they had indeed a hand; there is nought so dear to them — in especial to Fleischmann — as politics, and they are overjoyed if they may but be sent on some embassy. Aye, and they have done me some service, as a merchant trader, whensoever I have desired the safe conduct of princes and knights; but as to charging them with the safe conduct of my soul, the weal or woe of my immortal spirit! — No, no, never! Aye, Margery, for I have been a great sinner. Greater power and more mighty mediation are needed to save and deliver me, and behold, my Margery, meseems — hear me Margery — meseems a special ruling of Heaven hath sent .... When is it that his Eminence Cardinal Bernhardi will return from England?"

Hereupon I saw plainly what was in the wind. I answered him that his Eminence purposed to return hither in three or four months' time; he sighed

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deeply: "Not for so long — three months, do you say?"

"Or longer," quoth I, hastily; but he, forgetting the Friar, cried out as though he knew better than I: "No, no, in three months. So you said."

Then he spoke low again, and went on in a confident tone: "So long as that I can hold out, by the help of the Saints, if I .... Yea, for I have enough left to make some great endowment. My possessions, Margery, the estate which is mine own — No man can guess what a well-governed trading-house may earn in half a century. — Yes, I tell you, Margery, I can hold out and wait. Two, or at most three months; they will soon slip away. The older we grow and the duller is life, the swifter do the days fly."

And verily I had not the heart to tell him that he might have to take much longer patience, and, whereas I noted how hard he found it to speak out that which weighed on his mind, I gave him such help as I might; and then he freely confessed that what he most desired on earth was to receive absolution and the *Viaticum* from the hands of the Cardinal. Meseemed he believed that his Eminence's prayers would serve him better in Heaven than those of our simple priests, who had not even gained a bishop's cope; just as the good word of a Prince Elector gains the Emperor's ear sooner than the petition of a town councillor. Likewise it soothed his pride, doubtless, to think that he might turn his back on this world under the good guidance of a prelate in the purple. Here-

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upon I promised that his case should be brought to the Cardinal's knowledge by Ann, and then he gave me to understand that it was his desire that Ann should come to see him, inasmuch as that her presentment only had brought him more comfort than the strongest of Master Ulsenius' potions. He could not be happy to die without her forgiveness, and without blessing her by hand and word.

And he pointed to my likeness, and said that, albeit it was right well done, he could bear no more to see it; that it looked forth so full of health and hope, that to him it seemed as though it mocked his misery, and he straitly desired me to send Ann to him forthwith; the Saints would grant her a special grace for every hour she delayed not her coming.

Thereupon I departed; Ann was ready to do the dying man's bidding, and when I presently went with her into his presence he gazed on her as he had on her portrait, as it were bewitched by her person and manners; and ever after, if she were absent for more than a day or two, he bid her come to him, with prayers and entreaties. And he found means to touch her heart as he had mine; yet, whereas I, ere long, wearied of his complaining, Ann's compassion failed not; instead of yawning and being helpless to comfort him, she with great skill would turn his thoughts from himself and his sufferings.

Then they would often talk of Herdegen, and of how to come upon some trace of him, and whereas the old man had in former days left such matters to other

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folks, he now showed a right wise and keen experience in counselling the right ways and means. Hitherto he had trusted to Ursula's good words and commended us to the same confidence; now, however, he remembered on a sudden how ill-disposed she had ever been to my lost brother, and whereas it was the season of the year when the trading fleet should set sail from Venice for Alexandria in the land of Egypt, he sent forth a messenger to Kunz, charging him to take ship himself and go thither to seek his brother. This filled Ann and me likewise with fresh hope and true thankfulness. Yet, in truth, as for my grand-uncle, he owed much to Ann; her mere presence was as dew on his withered heart, and the hope she kept alive in him, that her uncle, my lord Cardinal, would ere long reach home and gladly fulfil his desires, gave him strength and will to live on, and kept the feeble spark of life burning.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE month of October had come; the Forest claimed us once more, and indeed at that season I was needed at the Forest lodge. A pressing bidding had likewise come to Ann; yet, albeit her much sitting in my grand-uncle's hot chamber had been visited on her with many a headache, she had made her attendance on him one of her duties and nought could move her to be unfaithful.

Moreover, it was known to us that by far the greater half of the Venetian galleons had sailed from the *Lido* between the 8th and 25th of the past month, and were due to be at home again by the middle of October or early in November. A much lesser fleet went forth from Venice late in the year and came to anchor there again, loaded with spices, in the month of March or not later than April. Hence now was the time when we might most surely look for tidings from the Levant, and Ann would not be out of the way in case any such might come to Nuremberg.

I rode forth on Saint Dionysius' day, the 9th day of October, alone with Cousin Maud; other guests were not long in following us and among them my brothers-in-law and the young Löffelholz pair; Elsa Ebner

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having wed, some months since, with young Jörg Löffelholz.

Uncle Christian would come later and, if she would consent, would bring Ann with him, for he held himself bound to give his "little watchman" some fresh air. Also he was a great friend in the Pernharts' house, and aught more happy and pleasant than his talks with the old Dame can scarce be conceived of.

Never had the well-beloved home in the Forest been more like to a pigeon cote. Every day brought us new guests, many of them from the city; still, none had any tidings yet of the Venice ships or of our Kunz, who should come home with them. And at this my heart quaked for fear, in despite of the hunting-sports, and of many a right merry supper; and Aunt Jacoba was no better. The weeks flew past, the red and yellow leaves began to fall, the scarlet berries of the mountain ash were shrivelled, and the white rime fell of nights on the meadows and moor-land.

One day I had ridden forth with my Uncle Conrad, hawking, and when we came home in the dusk I could add a few birds to the gentlemen's booty. All the guests at that time present were standing in the court-yard talking, many a one lamenting or boasting of the spite or favor of Saint Hubert that day, when the hounds, who were smelling about the game, suddenly uplifted their voices, and the gate-keeper's horn blew a merry blast, as though to announce some right welcome guest.

The housekeeper's face was seen at Aunt Jacoba's

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window, and so soon as tidings were brought of who it was that came, the dog-keeper's whips hastily silenced the hounds and drove them into the kennel. The serving-men carried off the game, and when the court-yard was presently cleared, behold, a strange procession came in.

First a long wain covered in by a tilt so high I trow that meseemed many a town gate might be over low to let it pass; and it was drawn by four right small little horses, with dark matted coats and bright, wilful eyes. A few hounds of choice breed ran behind it. From within the hangings came a sharp, shrill screaming as it were of many gaudy parrots.

In front of this waggon two men rode, unlike in stature and mien, and a loutish fellow led the horses.

Now, we all knew this wain right well. Heretofore, in the life-time of old Lorenz Waldstromer, the father of my Uncle Conrad, it had been wont to come hither once or twice a year, and was ever made welcome; if it should happen to come in the month of August it was at that season filled with noble falcons, to be placed on board ships at Venice, inasmuch as the Sultan of Egypt and his Emirs were so fain to buy them that they would give as much as a hundred and fifty sequins for the finest and best.

Old Jordan Kubbeling of Brunswick, the father of the man who had now come hither, was wont to send the birds to Alexandria by the hand of dealers, to sell them for him there; but his son Seyfried, who was to this day called Young Kubbeling, albeit he was nigh

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on sixty, would carry his feathered wares thither himself. Verily he was not suffered to sell any other goods in the land, inasmuch as the Republic set strait bounds to the dealings of German traders. If such an one would have aught from the Levant he may get it only through the Merchants' Hall or Fondaco in Venice; and much less is a German suffered to carry his wares, of what kind soever, out of Venice into the East, inasmuch as every German trader is bound to sell by the hand of the syndicate all which his native land can produce or make in Venice itself. And in no other wise may a German traffic in any matters, great or small, with the Venice traders; and all this is done that the Republic may lose nought of the great taxes they set on all things.

As to Seyfried Kubbeling, the great Council, by special grace, and considering that none but he could carry his birds over seas in good condition, had granted to him to go with them to the land of Egypt. For many and many a year had the Kubbelings brought falcons to the Waldstromers, and whensoever my uncle needed such a bird, or if he had to provide one for our lord constable and prince elector the Duke of Bavaria, or any other great temporal or spiritual prince, it was to be had from Seyfried — or Young Kubbeling. To be sure no man better knew where to choose a fine bird, and while he journeyed between Brunswick, Italy, and the Levant, his sons and brothers went as far as to Denmark, and from thence to Iceland in the frozen seas, where the royal falcon breeds. Yet are there

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right noble kinds likewise to be found in the Harz mountains, nigh to their native country.

The man who was ever Kubbeling's fellow, going with him to the Levant now, as, erewhile to the far North, was Uhlwurm, who, albeit he had been old Jordan's serving-man, was held by Seyfried as his equal; and whoso would make one his guest must be fain to take the other into the bargain. This was ever gladly done at the Forest-lodge; Uhlwurm was a man of few words, and the hunting-lads and kennel-men held him to be a wise man, who knew more than simply which side his bread was buttered. At any rate he was learned in healing all sick creatures, and in especial falcons, horses, and hounds, by means of whispered spells, the breath of his mouth, potions, and electuaries; and I myself have seen him handle a furious old she-wolf which had been caught in a trap, so that no man dared go nigh her, as though it were a tame little dog. He was taller than his master by a head and a half, and he was ever to be seen in a hood, on which an owl's head with its beak and ears was set. Verily the whole presence of the man minded me of that night-bird; and when I think of his Master Seyfried, or Young Kubbeling, I often remember that he was ever wont to wear three wild-cats' skins, which he laid on his breast and on each leg, as a remedy against pains he had. And the falcon-seller, who was thick-set and broad-shouldered, was in truth not unlike a wild-cat in his unkempt shagginess, albeit free from all craft and guile. His whole mien, in his yellow leather jerkin slashed

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with green, his high boots, and ill-shaven face covered with short, grey bristles, was that of a woodsman who has grown strange to man in the forest wilds; howbeit we knew from many dealings that he was honest and pitiful, and would endure hard things to be serviceable and faithful to those few whom he truly loved.

All the creatures he brought with him were for sale; even the Iceland ponies, which he but seldom led home again, by reason that they were in great favor with the Junkers and damsels of high degree in the castles where he found shelter; and my uncle believed that his profits and savings must be no small matter.

Scarce had Kubbeling and his fellow entered the court-yard, when the house wife appeared once more at my aunt's window, and bid him come up forthwith to her mistress. But the Brunswicker only replied roughly and shortly: "First those that need my help." And he spoke thus of a wounded man, whom he had picked up, nigh unto death, by the road-side. While, with Uhlwurm's help, he carefully lifted the youth from under the tilt, my uncle, who had long been hoping for his advent, gave him a questioning look. The other understood, and shook his head sadly to answer him No. And then he busied himself with the stricken man, as he growled out to my uncle: "I crossed the pond to Alexandria, but of your man — you know who — not a claw nor a feather. As to the Schopper brothers on the other hand .... But first let us try to get between this poor fellow and the grave. Hold on, Uhlwurm!" And he was about to lift the sick man in-

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doors. Howbeit, I went up to the Brunswicker, who in his rough wise had ever liked me well, and whereas meseemed he had seen my brothers, I besought him right lovingly to give me tidings of them; but he only pointed to the helpless man and said that such tidings as he had to give I should hear only too soon; and this I deemed was so forbidding and so dismal that I made up my mind to the worst; nay, and my fears waxed all the greater as he laid his big hand on my sleeve, as it might be to comfort me, inasmuch as that he had never yet done this save when he heard tell of my Hans' untimely end.

And then, since he would have none of my help in attending on the sick man, I ran up to my aunt to tell her with due care of the tidings I had heard; but my uncle had gone before me, and in the doorway I could see that he had just kissed his beloved wife's brow. I could read in both their faces that they were bereft of another hope, yet would my aunt go below and herself speak with Young Kubbeling. My uncle would fain have hindered her, but she paid no heed to his admonitions, and while her tiring-woman arrayed her with great care to appear at table, she thanked the saints for that Ann was far away on this luckless day.

Thus the hours sped between our homecoming from the chase and the evening meal, and we presently met all our guests in the refectory. Aunt Jacoba, as was her wont, sat on her couch on which she was carried, at the upper end of the table near the chimney-place, next to which a smaller table was spread, where

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Kubbeling and Uhlwurm took their seats as though they had never sat elsewhere in their lives; and in truth old Jordan had taken his meals in that same place, and whenever they came to the Lodge the serving people knew right well what was due to them and their fellows. And whereas they did not sit at the upper table, it was only by reason that old Jordan, sixty years ago, had deemed it a burthensome honor, and more than his due; and Young Kubbeling would in all things do as his father had done before him. My seat was where I might see them, and an empty chair stood between me and my aunt; this was left for Master Ulsenius, the leech. This good man loved not to ride after dark, by reason of highway robbers and plunderers, and some of us were somewhat ill at ease at his coming so late. Notwithstanding this, the talk was not other than cheerful; new guests had come to us from the town at noon, and they had much to tell. Tidings had come that the Sultan of Egypt had fallen upon the Island of Cyprus, and that the Mussulmans had beaten King Janus, who ruled over it, and had carried him beyond seas in triumph to Old Cairo, a prisoner and loaded with chains. Hereupon we were instructed by that learned man, Master Eberhard Windecke, who was well-read in the history of all the world — he had come to Nuremberg as a commissioner of finance from his Majesty, and Uncle Tucher had brought him forth to the Forest — he, I say, instructed us that the forefather of this King Janus of Cyprus had seized upon the crown of Jerusalem at the time of the crusades, during

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the lifetime of the mighty Sultan Saladin, by poison and perjury, and had then bartered it with the English monarch Richard *Cœur de Lion*, in exchange for the Kingdom of Cyprus. That ancestor of King Janus was by name Guy de Lusignan, and the sins of the fathers, so Master Windecke set forth with flowers of eloquence, were ever visited on the children, unto the third and fourth generation.

I, like most of the assembled company, had hearkened with due respect to this discourse; yet had I not failed to note with what restless eyes my aunt watched the two men when, after hardly staying their hunger and thirst, they forthwith quitted the hall to tend the sick man; she truly — as I would likewise — would rather have heard some present tidings than this record of sins of the Lusignans dead and gone. Presently the two men came back to their seats, and when Master Windecke, who, in speaking, had forgotten to eat, fell to with double good will, Uncle Conrad gravely bid Kubbeling to out with what he had to say; and yet the man, who was lifting the leg of a black-cock to his mouth, would reply no more than a rough, "All in good time, my lord."

Thus we had to wait; nor was it till the Brunswicker had cracked his last nut with his strong teeth, and the evening cup had been brought round, that he broke silence and told us in short, halting sentences how he had sailed from Venice to Alexandria in the land of Egypt, and all that had befallen his falcons. Then he stopped, as one who has ended his tale, and

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Uhlwurm said in a deep voice, and with a sweep of his hand as though to clear the crumbs from the table: "Gone!" — And that "Gone" was well-nigh the only word that ever I heard from the lips of that strange old man. As he went on with his tale Kubbeling made free with the wine, and albeit it had no more effect on him than clear water, still meseemed he talked on for his own easement; only when he told how and where he had vainly sought the banished Götz he looked grievously at my aunt's face. And Kunz, who had crossed the sea in the same ship with him, had helped him in that search.

When I then asked him whether Kunz had not likewise come home with him to Venice, and Kubbeling had answered me no, Uhlwurm said once more, or ever his master had done speaking, "Gone!" in his deep, mournful voice, and again swept away crumbs, as it might be, in the air. Hereupon so great a fear fell upon me that meseemed a sharp steel bodkin was being thrust into my heart; but Kubbeling had seen me turn pale, and he turned upon Uhlwurm in high wrath, and to the end that I might take courage he cried: "No, no, I say no. What does the old fool know about it! It is only by reason that the galley tarried for Junker Schopper and weighed anchor half a day later, that he forbodes ill. The delay was not needed. And who can tell what young masters will be at? They get a fancy in their green young heads, and it must be carried out whether or no. He swore to me with a high and solemn oath that he would not rest till

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he had found some trace of his brother, and if he kept the galleon waiting for that reason, what wonder? Is it aught to marvel at? And you, Mistress Margery, have of a surety known here in the Forest whither a false scent may lead. — Junker Kunz! Whither he may have gone to seek his brother, who can tell? Not I, and much less Uhlwurm. And young folks flutter hither and thither like an untrained falcon; and if Master Kunz, who is so much graver and wiser than others of his green youth, finds no one to open his eyes, then he may — I do not say for certain, but peradventure, for why should I frighten you all? — he may, I say, hunt high and low to all eternity. The late Junker Herdegen. . . ."

And again I felt that sharp pang through my heart, and I cried in the anguish of my soul: "The late Junker — late Junker, did you say? How came you to use such a word? By all you hold sacred, Kubbeling, torture me no more. Confess all you know concerning my elder brother!"

This I cried out with a quaking voice, but all too soon was I speechless again, for once more that dreadful "Gone!" fell upon my ear from Uhlwurm's lips.

I hid my face in my hands, and sitting thus in darkness, I heard the bird-dealer, in real grief now, repeat Uhlwurm's word of ill-omen: "Gone." Yet he presently added in a tone of comfort: "But only perchance — not for certain, Mistress Margery."

Albeit he was now willing to tell more, he was stopped in the very act. Neither he nor I had seen

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that some one had silently entered the hall with my Uncle Christian and Master Ulsenius, had come close to us, and had heard Uhlwurm's and Kubbeling's last words. This was Ann; and, as she answered to the Brunswicker "I would you were in the right with that 'perchance'. How gladly would I believe it!" I took my hands down from my face, and behold she stood before me in all her beauty, but in deep mourning black, and was now, as I was, an unwedded widow.

I ran to meet her, and now, as she clung to me first and then to my aunt, she was so moving a spectacle that even Uhlwurm wiped his wet cheeks with his finger-cloth. All were now silent, but Young Kubbeling ceased not from wiping the sweat of anguish from his brow, till at last he cried: "'Perchance' was what I said, and 'perchance' it still shall be; aye, by the help of the Saints, and I will prove it. . . ."

At this Ann uplifted her head, which she had hidden in my aunt's bosom, and Cousin Maud let drop her arms in which she held me clasped. The learned Master Windecke made haste to depart, as he could ill-endure such touching matters, while Uncle Conrad enquired of Ann what she had heard of Herdegen's end.

Hereupon she told us all in a low voice that yester-eve she had received a letter from my lord Cardinal, announcing that he had evil tidings from the Christian brethren in Egypt. She was to hold herself ready for the worst, inasmuch as, if they were right, great ill had befallen him. Howbeit it was not yet time to give up

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all hope, and he himself would never weary of his search: Young Kubbeling, who had meanwhile sent Uhlwurm with the leech to see the sick man and then taken his seat again with the wine-cup before him, had nevertheless kept one ear open, and had hearkened like the rest to what Ann had been saying; then on a sudden he thrust away his glass, shook his big fist in wrath, and cried out, to the door, as it were, through which Uhlwurm had departed, "That croaker, that death-watch, that bird of ill-omen! If he looks up at an apple-tree in blossom and a bird is piping in the branches, all he thinks of is how soon the happy creature will be killed by the cat! "Gone! gone indeed; what profits it to say gone! He has befogged even my brain at last with his black vapors. But now a light shines within me; and lend me an ear, young Mistress, and all you worshipful lords and ladies; for I said 'perchance' and I mean it still."

We listened indeed; and there was in his voice and mien a confidence which could not fail to give us heart. My lord Cardinal's assurance that we were not to rest satisfied with the evil tidings he had received, Kubbeling had deemed right, and what was right was to him a fact. Therefore had he racked his brain till the sweat stood on his brow, and all he had ever known concerning Herdegen had come back to his mind and this he now told us in his short, rude way, which I should in vain try to set down.

He said that, since the day when they had landed in Egypt, he had never more set eyes on Kunz, but

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that he himself had made enquiry for Herdegen. Anselmo Giustiniani was still the Republic's *consul* there, and lodging at the Venice Fondaco with Ursula his wife; but the serving men had said that they had never heard of Schopper of Nuremberg; nor was it strange that Kunz's coming should be unknown to them, inasmuch as, to be far from Ursula, he had found hospitality with the Genoese and not with the Venetians. When, on the eve of sailing for home, the Brunswicker had again waited on the authorities at the Fondaco, to procure his leave to depart and fetch certain moneys he had bestowed there, he had met Mistress Ursula; and whereas she knew him and spoke to him, he seized the chance to make enquiry concerning Herdegen. And it was from her mouth, and from none other, that he had learned that the elder Junker Schopper had met a violent death; and, when he had asked where and how, she had answered him that it was in one of those love-makings which were ever the aim and business of his life. Thus he might tell all his kith and kin in Nuremberg henceforth to cease their spying and prying, which had already cost her more pains and writing than enough.

This discourse had but ill-pleased Kubbeling, yet had he not taken it amiss, and had only said that she would be doing Kunz — who had come to Egypt with him — right good service, if she would give him more exact tidings of how his brother had met his end.

"Whereupon," said the bird-seller, "she gave me a look the like of which not many could give; for inas-

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much as the lady is, for certain, over eyes and ears in love with Junker Kunz. . . . "

But I stopped him, and said that in this he was of a certainty mistaken; Howbeit he laughed shortly and went on. "Which of us saw her? I or you? But love or no love — only listen till the end. Mistress Ursula for sure knew not till then that Junker Kunz was in Alexandria, and so soon as she learnt it she began to question me. She must know the day and hour when he had cast anchor there, wherefor he had chosen to lodge in the Genoa Fondaco, when I last had seen him, nay, and of what stuff and color his garments were made. She went through them all, from the feather in his hat to his hose. As for me, I must have seemed well nigh half witted, and I told her at last that I had no skill in such matters, but that I had ever seen him of an evening in a white mantle with a peaked hood. Hereupon the blood all left her face, and with it all her beauty. She clapped her hand to her forehead like one possessed or in a fit, as though caught in her own snare, and she would have fallen, if I had not held her upright. And then, on a sudden, she stood firm on her feet, bid me depart right roughly, and pointed to the door; and I was ready and swift enough in departing. When I was telling of all this to Uhlwurm, who had stayed without, and what I had heard concerning Junker Herdegen, he had nought to say but that accursed 'Gone!' And how that dazes me, old mole that I am, you yourselves have seen. But the demeanor of Mistress Tetzel of Nuremberg, I

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have never had it out of my mind since, day or night, nor again, yesterday."

He rubbed his damp brow, drank a draught, and took a deep breath; he was not wont to speak at such length. But whereas we asked him many questions of these matters, he turned again to us maidens, and said:

"Grant me a few words apart from the matter: you see, in time a man gets an eye for a falcon, and sees what its good points are, and if it ails aught. He learns to know the breed by its feathers, and breast-bone, and the color of its legs, and many another sign, and its temper by its eye and beak; — and it is the same with knowing of men. All this I learned not of myself, but from my father, God rest him; and like as you may know a falcon by the beak, so you may know a man or a woman by the mouth. And as I mind me of Mistress Ursula's face, as I saw it then, that is enough for me. Aye, and I will give my best Iceland Gerfalcon for a lame crow if every word she spoke concerning the death of Junker Herdegen was not false knavery. She is a goodly woman and of wondrous beauty; yet, as I sat erewhile, thinking and gazing into the Würzburg wine in my cup, I remembered her red lips and white teeth, as she bid me exhort his kin at home to seek the lost man no more. And I will plainly declare what that mouth brought to my mind; nought else than the muzzle of the she-wolf you caught and chained up. That was how she showed her tusks when Uhlwurm wheedled her after his wise, and she feigned to be his friend albeit she thirsted to take him

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by the throat. — False, I say, false, false was every word that came to my ears out of that mouth! I know what I know; she is mad for the sake of one of the Schoppers, and if it be not Kunz then it is the other, and if it be not with love then it is with hate. Make the sign of the cross, say I; she would put one or both of them out of the world, as like as not. For certain it is that she would fain have had me believe that the elder Junker Schopper had already come to a bad end, and it is no less certain that she had some foul purpose in hand."

The old man coughed, wiped his brow, and fell back in his seat; we, indeed, knew not what to think of his discourse, and looked one at the other with enquiry. Jung Kubbeling was the last man on earth we could have weened would read hearts. Only Uncle Christian upheld him, and declared that the future would ere long confirm all that wise old Jordan's son had foretold from sure signs.

The dispute waxed so loud that even our silent Chaplain put in his word, to express his consent to the Brunswicker's opinion of Ursula, and to put forward fresh proofs why, in spite of her statement, Herdegen might yet be in the land of the living.

At this moment the door flew open, and the housekeeper — who was wont to be a right sober-witted widow — rushed into the refectory, followed by my aunt's waiting-maid, both with crimson cheeks and so full of their matter that they forgot the reverence due to our worshipful guests, and it was hard at first to learn what

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had so greatly disturbed them. So soon as this was clear, Cousin Maud, and Ann and I at her heels, ran off to the chamber where Master Ulsenius still tarried with the sick traveller, inasmuch as that if the women were not deceived, the poor fellow was none other than Eppelein, Herdegen's faithful henchman. The tiring-woman likewise, a smart young wench, believed that it was he; and her opinion was worthy to be trusted by reason that she was one of the many maids who had looked upon Eppelein with favor.

We presently were standing by the lad's bedside; Master Ulsenius had just done with bandaging his head and body and arms; the poor fellow had been indeed cruelly handled, and but for the Brunswicker's help he must have died. That Kubbeling should not have known him, although they had often met in past years, was easy to explain; for I myself could scarce have believed that the pale, hollow-eyed man who lay there, to all seeming dying, was our brisk and nimble-witted Eppelein. Yet verily he it was, and Ann flung herself on her knees by the bed, and it was right piteous to hear her cry: "Poor, faithful Eppelein!" and many other good words in low and loving tones. Yet did he not hear nor understand, inasmuch as he was not in his senses. For the present there was nought of tidings to be had from him, and this was all the greater pity by reason that the thieves had stripped off his clothes, even to his boots, and thus, if he were the bearer of any writing, he might now never deliver it. Yet he had come with some message. When the men

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left us there Ann bent over him and laid a wet kerchief on his hot head, and he presently opened his eyes a little way, and pointed with his left hand, which was sound, to the end of the bed-place where his feet lay, and murmured, scarce to be heard and as though he were lost: "The letter, oh, the letter!" But then he lost his senses; and presently he said the same words again and again. So his heart and brain were full of one thing, and that was the letter which some one — and who else than his well-beloved Master — had straitly charged him to deliver rightly.

Every word he might speak in his fever might give us some important tidings, and when at midnight my aunt bid us go to bed, Ann declared it to be her purpose to keep watch by Eppelein all night, and I would not for the world have quitted her at such a moment. And whereas she well knew Master Ulsenius, and had already lent a helping hand of her own free will to old Uhlwurm, the tending the sick man was wholly given over to her; and I sat me down by the fire, gazing sometimes at the leaping flames and flying sparks, and sometimes at the sick-bed and at all Ann was doing. Then I waxed sleepy, and the hours flew past while I sat wide awake, or dreaming as I slept for a few minutes. Then it was morning again, and there was somewhat before my eyes whereof I knew not whether it were happening in very truth, or whether it were still a dream, yet meseemed it was so pleasant that I was still smiling when the house-keeper came in, and that chased sleep away. I thought I had seen Ann lead

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ugly old Uhlwurm to the window, and stroke down his rough cheeks with her soft small hand. This being all unlike her wonted timid modesty, it amused me all the more, and the old man's demeanor likewise had made me smile; he was surly, and notwithstanding courteous to her and had said to her I know not what. Now, when I was wide-awake, Ann had indeed departed, and the house-wife had seen her quit the house and walk towards the stables, following old Uhlwurm.

Hereupon a strange unrest fell upon me, and when Kubbeling presently answered to my questioning that old Uhlwurm had craved leave to be absent till noon, to the end that he might go to the very spot where they had found Eppelein, and make search for that letter which he doubtless had had on his person, I plainly saw wherefor Ann had beguiled the old man.

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CHAPTER X.

"THE old owl! I will give him somewhat to remember me by till some one else can say 'Gone' over him!" This was what my Uncle Christian growled a little later, out near the stables, where Matthew was putting the bridle on my bay nag, while the other servingmen were saddling the horses for the gentlemen. I had stolen hither, knowing full well that the old folks would not have suffered me to ride forth after Ann, and my good godfather even now ceased not from railing, in his fears for his darling. "What else did we talk of yestereve, Master leech and I, all the way we rode with the misguided maid, but of the wicked deeds done in these last few weeks on the high roads, and here in this very wood? With her own ears, she heard us say that the town constable required us to take seven mounted men as outriders, by reason that the day before yesterday the whole train of waggons of the Borchtels and the Schnöds was overtaken, and the convoy would of a certainty have been beaten if they had not had the aid, by good-hap, of the fellowship marching with the Maurers and the Derrers. — And it was pitch dark, owls were flitting, foxes barking; it was enough to make even an old scarred soldier's blood run cold. It is a sin and a shame how the rogues ply

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their trade, even close under the walls of the city! They cut off a bleacher's man's ears, and when I wished that young Eber of Wichsenstein, and all the rout that follows him might come to the gallows, Ann made bold to plead for them, by reason that he only craved to visit on the Nurembergers the cruel death they brought upon his father the famous thief. As if she did not know full well that, since Eppelein of Gailingen was cast into prison, our land has never been such a den of murder and robbery as at this day. If there is less dust to be seen on the high-ways, said the keeper, it is by reason that it is washed away in blood. And notwithstanding all this the crazy maid runs straight into the Devil's arms, with that old dolt."

Then, when I went into the stable to mount, Uncle Conrad turned on Kubbeling in stormy ire for that he had suffered Uhlwurm to lead Ann into such peril; howbeit the Brunswicker knew how to hold his own, and declared at last that he could sooner have looked to see a falcon grow a lion's tail in place of feathers, than that old death-watch make common cause with a young maiden. "He had come forth," quoth he, "to counsel their excellencies to take horse." But my uncle's question, whether he, Kubbeling, believed that they had come forth to the stables to hear mass, put an end to his discourse; the gentlemen called to the serving-men to make speed, and I was already in the saddle. Then, when I had commanded Endres to open the great gate, I bowed my head low and rode out through the stable door, and bade the company a

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hearty good-day. To this they made reply, while Uncle Conrad asked whether I had forgotten his counsels, and whither it was my intent to ride; whereupon I hastily replied: "Under safe guidance, that is to say yours, to follow Ann."

My uncle slashed his boot with his whip, and asked in wrath whether I had considered that blood would perchance be shed, and ended by counselling me kindly: "So stay at home, little Margery!"

"I am as obedient as ever," was my ready answer, "but whereas I am now well in the saddle, "I will stay in the saddle."

At this the old man knew not whether to take a jest as a jest, or to give me a stern order; and while he and the others were getting into their stirrups he said: "Have done with folly when matters are so serious, madcap child! We have enough to do to think of Ann, and more than enough! So dismount, Margery, with all speed."

"All in good time," said I then, "I will dismount that minute when we have found Ann. Till then the giant Goliath shall not move me from the saddle!"

Hereupon the old man lost patience, he settled himself on his big brown horse and cried out in a wrathful and commanding tone: "Do not rouse me to anger, Margery. Do as I desire and dismount."

But that moment he could more easily have made me to leap into the fire than to leave Ann in the lurch; I raised the bridle and whip, and as the bay broke into a gallop Uncle Conrad cried out once more, in greater

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wrath than before: "Do as I bid you!" and I joyfully replied "That I will if you come and fetch me!" And my horse carried me off and away, through the open gate.

The gentlemen tore after me, and if I had so desired they would never have caught me till the day of judgment, inasmuch as that my Hungarian palfrey, which my Hans had brought for me from the stables of Count von Cilly, the father of Queen Barbara, was far swifter than their heavy hook-nosed steeds; yet as I asked no better than to seek Ann in all peace with them, and as my uncle was a mild and wise man, who would not take the jest he could not now spoil over seriously, I suffered them to gain upon me and we concluded a bargain to the effect that all was to be forgotten and forgiven, but that I was pledged to turn the bay and make the best of my way home at the first sign of danger. And if the gentlemen had come to the stables in a gloomy mood and much fear, the wild chase after me had recovered their high spirits; and, albeit my own heart beat sadly enough, I did my best to keep of good cheer, and verily the sight of Kubbeling helped to that end. He was to show us the way to the spot where he had found Eppelein, and was now squatted on a very big black horse, from which his little legs, with their strange gear of catskins, stuck out after a fashion wondrous to behold. After we had thus gone at a steady pace for some little space, my confidence began to fail once more; even if Ann and her companion had been somewhat delayed

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by their search, still ought we to have met them by this time, if they had gone to the place without tarrying, and set forth to return unhindered. And when, presently, we came to an open plot whence we might see a long piece of the forest path, and yet saw nought but a little charcoal burner's cart, meseemed as though a cold hand had been laid on my heart. Again and again I spied the distance, while a whole army of thoughts and terrors tossed my soul. I pictured them in the power of the vengeful Eber von Wichsenstein and his fierce robber fellows; methought the covetous Bremberger had dragged them into his castle postern to exact a great ransom — nor was this the worst that might befall. If Abersfeld the wildest freebooter of all the plundering nobles far or near were to seize her? My blood ran cold as I conceived of this chance. Ann was so fair; what lord who might carry her off could she fail to inflame? And then I minded me of what I had read of the Roman Lucretia, and if I had been possessed of any magic art, I would have given the first raven by the way a sharp bodkin that he should carry it to her.

In my soul's anguish, while I held my bridle and whip together in my left hand, with the right I lifted the gold cross on my breast to my lips and in a silent heartfelt prayer I besought the Blessed Virgin, and my own dear mother in Heaven to have her in keeping.

And so we rode on and on till we came to the pools by Pillenreuth. Hard by the larger of these, known as the King's pool, was a sign-post, and not far away was

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the spot where they had found Eppelein, stripped and plundered; and in truth it was the very place for highwaymen and freebooters, lying within the wood and aside from the highway; albeit, if it came to their taking flight, they might find it again by Reichelstorf. Nor was there any castle nor stronghold anywhere nigh; the great building with walls and moats which stood on the south side of the King's pool was but the peaceful cloister of the Augustine Sisters of Pillenreuth. All about the water lay marsh-ground overgrown with leafless bushes, rushes, tall grasses, and reeds. It was verily a right dismal and ill-boding spot.

The boggy tract across which our path lay was white with fresh hoar-frost, and the thicket away to the south was a haunt for crows such as I never have seen again since; the black birds flew round and about it in dark clouds with loud shrieks, as though in its midst stood a charnel and gallows, and from the brushwood likewise, by the pool's edge, came other cries of birds, all as full of complaining as though they were bewailing the griefs of the whole world.

Here we stayed our horses, and called and shouted; but none made answer, save only toads and crows.

"This is the place, for certain," said Young Kubbeling, and Grubner the head forester, sprang to his feet to help him down from his tall mare. The gentlemen likewise dismounted, and were about to follow the Brunswicker across the mead to the place where Eppelein had been found; but he bid them not, inasmuch as they would mar the track he would fain discover.

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They, then, stood still and gazed after him, as I did likewise; and my fears waxed greater till I verily believed that the crows were indeed birds of ill-omen, as I saw a large black swarm of them wheel croaking round Kubbeling. He, meanwhile, stooped low, seeking any traces on the frosted grass, and his short, thick-set body seemed for all the world one of the imps, or pixies, which dwell among the roots of trees and in the holes in the rocks. He crept about with heedful care and never a word, prying as he went, and presently I could see that he shook his big head as though in doubt, nay, or in sorrow. I shuddered again, and meseemed the grey clouds in the sky waxed blacker, while deathly pale airy forms floated through the mist over the pools, in long, waving winding-sheets. The thick black heads of the bulrushes stood up motionless like grave-stones, and the grey silken tufts of the bog-grass, fluttering in the cold breath of a November morning, were as ghostly hands, threatening or warning me.

Ere long I was to forget the crows, and the fogs, and the reed-grass, and all the foolish fears that possessed me, by reason of a real and well-founded terror; again did Kubbeling shake his head, and then I heard him call to my Uncle Conrad and Grubner the head-forester, to come close to him, but to tread carefully. Then they stood at his side, and they likewise stooped low and then my uncle clasped his hands, and he cried in horror, "Merciful Heaven!"

In two minutes I had run on tip-toe across the damp, frosted grass to join them, and there, sure

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enough, I could see full plainly the mark of a woman's dainty shoe. The sole and the heel were plainly to be seen, and, hard by, the print of a man's large, broad shoes, with iron-shod heels, which told Kubbeling that they were those of Uhlwurm's great boots. Yet though we had not met those we sought, the forest was full of by-ways, by which they might have crossed us on the road; but nigh to the foot-prints of the maid and the old man were there three others. The old woodsman could discern them only too well; they had each and all been made in the hoar-frost by men's boots. Two, it was certain, had been left by finely-cut soles, such as are made by skilled city cordwainers; and one left a track which could only be that of a spur; whereas the third was so flat and broad that it was for sure that of the shoe of a peasant, or charcoal burner.

There was a green patch in the frost which could only be explained as having been made by one who had lain long on the earth, and the back of his head, where he had fallen, had left a print in the grass as big as a man's fist. Here was clear proof that Ann and her companion had, on this very spot, been beset by three robbers, two of them knights and one of low degree, that Uhlwurm had fought hard and had overpowered one of them or had got the worst of it, and had been flung on the grass.

Alas! there could be no doubt, whereas Kubbeling found a foot-print of Ann's over which the spurred mark lay, plainly showing that she had come thither

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before those men. And on the highway we found fresh tracks of horses and men; thus it was beyond all doubt that knavish rogues had fallen upon Ann and Uhlwurm, and had carried them off without bloodshed, for no such trace was to be seen anywhere on the mead.

Meanwhile the forester had followed the scent with the bloodhounds, starting from the place where the man had lain on the grass, and scarce were they lost to sight among the brushwood when they loudly gave tongue, and Grubner cried to us to come to him. Behind a tall alder bush, which had not yet lost its leaves, was a wooden lean-to on piles, built there by the Convent fisherman wherein to dry his nets; and beneath this shelter lay an old man in the garb of a serving-man, who doubtless had lost his life in the struggle with Uhlwurm. But Kubbeling was soon kneeling by his side, and whereas he found that his heart still beat, he presently discovered what ailed the fellow. He was sleeping off a drunken bout, and more by token the empty jar lay by his side. Likewise hard by there stood a hand-barrow, full of such wine-jars, and we breathed more freely, for if the drunken rogue were not himself one of the highway gang, they must have found him there and seized the good liquor.

Now, while Kubbeling fetched water from the pool, Uncle Christian tried the quality of the jars in the barrow, and the first he opened was fine *Malvoisie*. Whether this were going to the Convent or no the drunken churl should tell, and a stream of cold

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November-water ere long brought him to his wits. Then was there much mirth, as the rogue thus waked on a sudden from his sleep let the water drip off him in dull astonishment, and stared at us open-mouthed; and it needed some patience till he was able to tell us of many matters which we afterwards heard at greater length and in fuller detail.

He was a serving-man to Master Rummel of Nuremberg, who had been sent forth from Lichtenau to carry this good liquor to the nuns at Pillenreuth; the market-town of Lichtenau lieth beyond Schwabach and had of yore belonged to the Knight of Heideck, who had sold it to that city, of which the Rummels, who were an old and honored family, had bought it, with the castle.

Now, whereas yestereve the Knight of Heideck, the former owner of the castle, a noble of staunch honor, was sitting at supper with Master Rummel in the fortress of Lichtenau, a rider from Pillenreuth had come in with a petition from the Abbess for aid against certain robber folk who had carried away some cattle pertaining to the convent. Hereupon the gentlemen made ready to go and succor the sisters, and with wise foresight they sent a barrow-load of good wine to Pillenreuth, to await them there, inasmuch as that no good liquor was to be found with the pious sisters. When the gentlemen had, this very morning, come to the place where the highwaymen had fallen on Eppelein, they had met Ann who was known to them at the Forest lodge, where she was in the act of making search

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for Herdegen's letter, and they, in their spurred boots, had helped her. At last they had besought her to go with them to the Convent, by reason that the men-at-arms of Lichtenau had yesternight gone forth to meet the thieves, and by this time peradventure had caught them and found the letter on them. Ann had consented to follow this gracious bidding, if only she might give tidings of where she would be to those her friends who would for certain come in search of her. Thereupon Master Rummel had commanded the serving-man, who had come up with the barrow, to tarry here and bid us likewise to the Convent; the fellow, however, who had already made free on his way with the contents of the jars, had tried the liquor again. And first he had tumbled down on the frosted grass and then had laid him down to rest under the fisherman's hut.

Rarely indeed hath a maiden gone to the cloister with a lighter heart than I, after I had heard these tidings, and albeit there was yet cause for fear and doubting, I could be as truly mirthful as the rest, and or ever I jumped into my saddle again I had many a kiss from bearded lips as a safe conduct to the Sisters. My good godfather in the overflowing joy of his heart rushed upon me to kiss me on both cheeks and on my brow, and I had gladly suffered it and smiled afterwards to perceive that he would allow the barrow-man to tarry no longer.

In the Convent there was fresh rejoicing. The mist had hidden us from their sight, and we found

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them all at breakfast: the gentlemen and Ann, the lady Abbess and a novice who was the youngest daughter of Uncle Endres Tucher of Nuremberg, and my dear cousin, well-known likewise to Ann. Albeit the Convent was closed to all other men, it was ever open to its lord protector. Hereupon was a right happy meeting and glad greeting, and at the sight of Ann for the second time this day, though it was yet young, the bright tears rolled over Uncle Christian's round twice-double chin.

Now wheresoever a well-to-do Nuremberg citizen is taking his ease with victuals and drink, if others join him they likewise must sit down and eat with him, yea, if it were in hell itself. But the Convent of Pillenreuth was a right comfortable shelter, and my lady the Abbess a woman of high degree and fine, hospitable manners; and the table was made longer in a winking, and laid with white napery and plates and all befitting. None failed of appetite and thirst after the ride in the sharp morning air, and how glad was my soul to have my Ann again safe and unharmed.

We were seated at table by the time our horses were tied up in the stables, and from the first minute there was a mirthful and lively exchange of talk. For my part I forthwith fell out with the Knight von Heideck, inasmuch as he was fain to sit betwixt Ann and me, and would have it that a gallant knight must ever be a more welcome neighbor to a damsel than her dearest woman-friend. And the loud cheer and merry-making were ere long overmuch for me; and I would

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gladly have withdrawn with Ann to some lonely spot, there to think of our dear one.

At last we were released; Jörg Starch, the captain of the Lichtenau horsemen, a tall, lean soldier, with shrewd eyes, a little turned-up cock-nose, and thick full beard, now came in and, lifting his hand to his helmet, said as sharply as though he were cutting each word short off with his white teeth: "Caught; trapped; all the rabble!"

In a few minutes we were all standing on the rampart between the pools and the Convent, and there were the miserable knaves whom Jörg Starch and his men-at-arms had surrounded and carried off while they were making good cheer over their morning broth and sodden flesh. They had declared that they had been of Wichsenstein's fellowship, but had deserted Eber by reason of his over-hard rule, and betaken themselves to robbery on their own account. Howbeit Starch was of opinion that matters were otherwise. When he had been sent forth to seek them he had as yet no knowledge of the attack on Eppelein; now, so soon as he heard that they had stripped him of his clothes, he bid them stand in a row and examined each one; in truth they were a pitiable crew, and had they not so truly deserved our compassion their rags must have moved us to laughter. One had made his cloak of a woman's red petticoat, pulling it over his head and cutting slits in it for arm-holes, and another great fellow wore a friar's brown frock and on his head a good-wife's fur turban tied on with an infant's swaddling band. Jörg

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Starch's enquiries as to where were Eppelein's garments made one of them presently point to his decent and whole jerkin, another to his under coat, and the biggest man of them all to his hat with the cock's feather, which was all unmatched with his ragged weed. Starch searched each piece for the letter, and meanwhile Uhlwurm stooped his long body, groping on the ground in such wise that it might have seemed that he was seeking the four-leaved clover; and on a sudden he laid hands on the shoes of a lean, low fellow, with hollow cheeks and a thrifty beard on his sharp chin, who till now had looked about him, the boldest of them all; he felt round the top of the shoes, and looking him in the face, asked him in a threatening voice: "Where are the tops?"

"The tops?" said the man in affrighted tones. "I wear shoes, Master, and shoes are but boots which have no tops; and mine. . . ."

"And yours!" quoth Uhlwurm in scorn. "The rats have made shoes of your boots and have eaten the tops, unless it was the mice? Look here, Captain, if it please you. . . ."

Starch did his bidding, and when he had made the lean knave put off his left shoe he looked at it on all sides, stroked his beard the wrong way, and said solemnly: "Well said, Master, this is matter for thought! All this gives the case a fresh face." And he likewise cried to the rogue: "Where are the tops?"

The fellow had had time to collect himself, and answered boldly: "I am but a poor weak worm, my lord

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Captain; they were full heavy for me, so I cut them away and cast them into the pool, where by now the carps are feeding on them." And he glanced round at his fellows, as it were to read in their faces their praise of his quick wit. Howbeit they were in overmuch dread to pay him that he looked for; nay, and his bold spirit was quelled when Starch took him by the throat and asked him: "Do you see that bough there, my lad? If another lie passes your lips, I will load it with a longer and heavier pear than ever it bore yet? Sebald, bring forth the ropes. — Now my beauty; answer me three things: Did the messenger wear boots? How come you, who are one of the least of the gang, to be wearing sound shoes? And again, Where are the tops?"

Whereupon the little man craved, sadly whimpering, that he might be asked one question at a time, inasmuch as he felt as it were a swarm of humble-bees in his brain, and when Starch did his will he looked at the others as though to say: "You did no justice to my ready wit," and then he told that he had in truth drawn off the boots from the messenger's feet and had been granted them to keep, by reason that they were too small for the others, while he was graced with a small and dainty foot. And he cast a glance at us ladies on whom he had long had an eye, a sort of fearful leer, and went on: "The tops — they. . . ." and again he stuck fast. Howbeit, as Starch once more pointed to the pear-tree, he confessed in desperate terror that another man had claimed the tops, one who

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had not been caught, inasmuch as they were so high and good. Hereupon Starch laughed so loud and clapped his hand with such a smack as made us maidens start, and he cried: "That's it, that is the way of it! Zounds, ye knaves! Then the Sow* of Wichsenstein was himself your leader yesterday, and it was only by devilish ill-hap that the knave was not with you when I took you! You ragged ruffians would never have given over the tops in this marsh and moorland, to any but a rightful master, and I know where the Sow is lurking — for the murderer of a messenger is no more to be called a Boar. Now then, Sebald! In what hamlet hereabout dwells there a cobbler?"

"There is crooked Peter at Neufess, and Hackspann at Reichelstorf," was the answer.

"Good; that much we needed to know," said Starch. "And now, little one," and he gave the man another shaking, "Out with it. Did the Sow — or, that there may be no mistake — did Eber of Wichsenstein ride away to Neufess or to Reichelstorf? Who was to sew the tops to his shoes, Peter or Hackspann?"

The terrified creature clasped his slender hands in sheer amazement, and cried: "Was there ever such abounding wisdom born in the land since the time of chaste Joseph, who interpreted Pharaoh's dreams? The man who shall catch you asleep, my lord Captain, must rise earlier than such miserable hunted wretches as we

* Eber, his name, means a boar. This is a sort of punning insult.

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are. He rode to Neufess, albeit Hackspann is the better cobbler. Reichelstorf lies hard by the highway by which you came, my lord; and if Eber does but hear the echo of your right glorious name, my lord Baron and potent Captain. . . ."

"And what is my name — your lord Baron and potent Captain?" Starch thundered out.

"Yours?" said the little man unabashed. "Yours? Merciful Heaven! Till this minute I swear I could have told you; but in such straits a poor little tailor such as I might forget his own father's honored name!" At this Starch laughed out and clapped the little rogue in all kindness behind the ears, and when his men-at-arms, whom he had commanded to make ready, had mounted their horses, he cried to Uhlwurm: "I may leave the rest to you, Master; you know where Barthel bestows the liquor! — Now, Sebald, bind this rabble and keep them safe. — And make a pig-sty ready. If I fail to bring the boar home this very night, may I be called Dick Dule to the end of my days instead of Jörg Starch!"

And herewith he made his bow, sprang into his saddle, and rode away with his men.

"A nimble fellow, after God's heart!" quoth Master Rummel to my Uncle Conrad as they looked after him. And that he was in truth; albeit we could scarce have looked for it, we learned on the morrow that he might bear his good name to the grave, inasmuch as he had taken Eber of Wichsenstein captive in the cobbler's work-place, and carried him to Pillen-

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reuth, whence he came to Nuremberg, and there to the gallows.

Starch had left a worthy man to fill his place; hardly had he departed when old Uhlwurm pulled off the tailor's right shoe, and now it was made plain wherefor Eppelein had so anxiously pointed to his feet; the letter entrusted to him had indeed been hid in his boot. Under the lining leather of the sole it lay, but only one from Akusch addressed to me. Howbeit, when we had threatened the now barefoot knave with cruel torture, he confessed that, having been an honest tailor till of late, he had soft feet by reason that he had ever sat over his needle. And when he pulled on the stolen shoes somewhat therein hard hurt his sole, and when he made search under the leather, behold a large letter closely folded and sealed. This had been the cause and reason of his being ill at ease, and he had opened it, being of an enquiring mind, and, inasmuch as he was a schoolmaster's son he could read with the best. Howbeit, at that time the gang were about to light the fire to make their supper, and whereas it would not burn by reason of the wet, they had taken the dry paper and used it to make the feeble flame blaze up.

Thus there was nought more to be hoped for, save that the tailor might by good hap remember certain parts of the letter; and in truth he was able to tell us that it was written to a maid named Ann, and in it there were such words of true love in great straits and bitter parting as moved him to tears, by reason that he likewise had once had a true love.

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While he spoke thus he perceived that Ann was the maiden to whom the letter had been writ, and he forthwith poured forth a great flow of fiery love-vows such as he may have learned from his *Amadis*, but never, albeit he said it, from that letter.

One thing at least he could make known to us from Herdegen's letter; and that was that the writer said much concerning slavery and a great ransom, and likewise of a malignant woman who was his foe, and of her husband, whose wiles could by no means be brought to nought unless it were by cunning and prudent craft. This, indeed, he could repeat well-nigh word for word, by reason that he had conceived the plan of urging Eber to set forth for the land of Egypt with his robber-band, and deliver that guiltless slave from the hands of the misbelieving heathen. Albeit he had made himself a highway thief, it was only by reason that he had been told that von Wichsenstein had no other end than to restore to the poor that of which the rich had robbed them, and to release the oppressed from the power of the mighty. All this had not suffered him to rest on his tailor's bench till he had laid down the needle and seized the cook's great roasting spit. Ere long he had discovered that, like master like man, each man cared for himself alone. He himself had been forced to do many cruel and knavish deeds, sorely against his will and all that was good in him. From his pious and gentle mother he had come by a soft and harmless soul, so that in the winter season he would strew sugar for the flies when they

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were starving, and it had even gone against him to stick his needle into a flesh-colored garment for sheer fear of hurting it. When the others had left the messenger-lad stripped on the road, he had gone back alone and had bound up the wound in his head with his own kerchief, and more by token that he spoke the truth the kerchief bore his Christian name in the corner of it, "Pignot," which his good mother, God rest her, had sewn there. He was but a poor orphan, and if.... Here his voice failed him for sobs. But ere long he recovered his good cheer; for Ann had indeed marked the letter *P* on the cloth about Eppelein's head, and the poor wight was of a truth none other than he had declared. Hereupon we made bold to speak for him, and it was to his own act of mercy and the letters set in his kerchief by that pious mother that he owed it. He afterwards came to be an honest and worthy master-tailor at Velden, and instead of taking up the cudgels for his oppressed fellow men, he suffered stern treatment in much humility at the hands of the great woman whom he chose to wife, notwithstanding he was so small a man.

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CHAPTER XI.

HERDEGEN'S letter was burnt with fire, and the letter from Akusch was to me, and contained little besides thanks and assurances of faithfulness due to me his "beloved mistress," with greetings to Cousin Maud, who had ever with just reproofs kept him in the right way, and to every member of the household. The *Postscriptum* only contained tidings of great import; and it was as follows:

"Moreover I declare and swear to you, my gracious lady, that my kindred take as good care of my Lord Kunz as though he were at home in Nuremberg. His wounds are bad, yet by faithful care, and by the grace and help of God the all-merciful, they shall be healed. He lacks for nothing. In the matter of my lord Herdegen's ransom there are many obstacles.

"Had God the all-merciful but granted to my dear father to hold his high estate a few weeks longer, it would have been a small matter to him to release a slave; but now he is cast into a dungeon by the evil malice of his enemies. Oh! that the all-wise God should suffer such malignant men to live as his foes and as that shameless woman whom you have long known by the name of Ursula Tetzel! But you will

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have learnt by my lord Herdegen's letter all I could tell, and you will understand that your humble servant will daily beseech the Most High God to prosper you, and cause you to send hither some wise and potent captain to the end that we may be delivered; inasmuch as the craft and fury of our foes are no less than their power. They are lions and likewise poisonous serpents."

These lines were signed with the name of Akusch, and the words, Ibn Tagri Verdi al-Mahmudi, which is to say: Akusch, Son of Tagri Verdi al-Mahmudi.

We were at home at the Forest-lodge or ever the sun had set; there we found Aunt Jacoba more calm than we had hoped for, inasmuch as that not only had her husband sent her brief tidings of us, but likewise she had heard more exactly all that had kept us away. Kubbeling, albeit the lady Abbess had bidden him to her table, had privily stolen forth to send a messenger to the grieving lady, whereas the thought of her gave him no peace among the feasters. Eppelein was neither better nor worse. But, in his stead, Master Windecke the Imperial Councillor, who was learned in the trading matters of all the world and who, in our absence, had wholly won the heart of the other women and, above all, of Cousin Maud by his good discourse, was able to interpret somewhat which had been dark to us in Akusch's letter. When I showed it to him he started to his feet in amazement and declared that my squire's father, Tagri Verdi al-Mahmudi, had been one of the most famous Captains of the host who had

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struck the great blow in Cyprus and carried off King Janus to the Sultan at Cairo. Nay, and he could likewise tell us what had led to the overthrow of this same Tagri Verdi, inasmuch as he had heard the tale from a certain noble gentleman of Cyprus, who had come to the court of Emperor Sigismund to entreat him to provide moneys for the ransom of King Janus, as follows: When Akusch's glorious father was raised to the dignity of a chief Mameluke, together with Burs Bey, now the Sultan of Egypt, they were both cast into prison during a certain war and lay in the same dungeon. There had Tagri Verdi dreamed one night that his fellow, Burs Bey, would in due time be placed on the throne, and had revealed this to him. Then, when this prophecy was fulfilled, and Burs Bey was Sultan, Tagri Verdi rose step by step to high honor, and had won many glorious fights as his Sovereign's chief Emir and Captain. The Sultan heaped him with honors and treasure, until he learned that his former companion had dreamed another dream, and this time that it was to be his fate to mount the throne. Hereupon Burs Bey was sore afraid; thus he had cast the victorious Captain into prison, and many feared for Tagri that his life would not be spared.

And Master Windecke could tell us yet more of the matter; and whereas from him we heard that our Emperor, by reason that his coffers were empty, could do nought to ransom King Janus, and that the Republic of Venice was fain to take it in hand, we were in greater fear than ever, inasmuch as this must need

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add yet more to the high respect already enjoyed by the Republic in the land of Egypt, and to that in which its Consul Giustiniani was held; and thereby his wife Ursula might, with the greater security, give vent to that malice she bore in her heart against Herdegen.

Thus we went to our beds silent and downcast; and after we had lain there a long time and found no sleep the words would come, and I said: "My poor, dear Kunz! to lie there in that hot Moorish land, wounded and alone! Oh, Ann, that must be full hard to bear."

"Hard indeed!" quoth she in a low voice. "But for a free man, and so proud a man as Herdegen, to be a slave to a misbelieving Heathen, far away from all he loves, and chidden and punished for every unduteous look; Oh, Margery! to think of that!" And her voice failed.

I spoke to her, and showed that we had much to make us thankful, inasmuch as we now at last knew that he we loved was yet alive.

Then was there silence in the chamber; but I minded me then of what Akusch had written, that he besought some wise and mighty gentleman to set forth from Nuremberg to overpower the foe, and now I racked my brain to think whom we might send to take my brothers' cause in hand — yet still in vain. None could I think of who might conveniently quit home for so long, or who was indeed fit for such an enterprise.

Which of us twain first fell asleep I wist not; when I woke in the morning Ann had already quitted the chamber; and while Susan braided my hair, all I had

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been planning in the night grew plainer to me, and I went forth and down stairs full of a great purpose which made my heart beat the faster. When I entered the hall, behold, I saw the same thing, albeit I was now awake, as I had seen yestermorn in my half-sleep. Yet was it not Uhlwurm, but Kubbeling, to whom Ann was paying court. As he stood facing her, she looked him trustfully in the eyes, and held his great hand in hers; nay, and when she saw me she did not let it go, but cried out in a clear and thankful voice: "Then so it is, Father Seyfried; and if you do as I beseech you, all will come to a good end and you will remember so good a deed with great joy all your life long."

"As to 'great joy' I know not," replied he. "For if I be not the veriest fool in all the land from Venice to Iceland, my name is not Kubbeling. I scarce know myself! Howbeit, let that pass: I stand by my word, albeit the pains I shall endure in the winter journey."

"The Saints will preserve you on so pious an errand," Ann declared. "And if they should nevertheless come upon you, dear Father, I will tend you as your own daughter would. And now again your hand, and a thousand, thousand thanks."

Whereupon Kubbeling, with a melancholy growl, and yet a smile on his face, held forth his hand, and Ann held it fast and cried to me: "You are witness, Margery, that he has promised to do my will. Oh, Margery, I could fly for gladness!"

And verily meseemed as though the wings had grown, and her eyes sparkled right joyfully and thank-

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fully. And I had discerned from her very first words whereunto she had beguiled Kubbeling; and verily to me it was a marvel, inasmuch as I myself had imagined the self-same thing in the watches of the night, and while my hair was doing: namely, to beseech Kubbeling to be my fellow and keeper on a voyage to Egypt. Who but he knew the way so well? Howbeit, Ann had prevented me, and now, whereas I heard the sound of voices on the stair, I yet found time to cry to her: "We go together, Ann; that is a settled matter!"

Hereupon she looked at me, at first in amazement and then with a blissful consenting smile, and said: "You had imagined the same thing, I know. Yes, Margery, we will go."

The others now trooped in, and I had no more time but hastily to clasp her hand. Howbeit, when most of our guests had gone into the refectory, where the morning meal was by this time steaming on the board, none were left with us save Cousin Maud and Uncle Conrad and Uncle Christian; and Uncle Conrad enquired of the Brunswicker whether he purposed indeed to set forth this day, and the man answered No, if so be that his lordship the grand-forester would grant him shelter yet awhile, and consent to a plan to which he had been just now beguiled.

And my uncle gave him his hand, and said the longer he might stay the better. And then he went on to ask with some curiosity what that plan might be. Howbeit, I took upon me to speak, and I told him in few words how that we had been thinking whom we

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might best send forth to help my brethren, and that, with the morning sun, light had dawned on our minds, and that whereas we had found a faithful and experienced companion, it was our firm intent. . . .

Here Cousin Maud broke in, having come close to me with open ears, crying aloud in terror: "What?" Howbeit I looked her in the eyes and went on: "When our mind is set, Cousin, the thing will be done, of that you and all may make certain — that stands as sure as the castle on the rock. And be it known to you all, with all due respect, that this time I will suffer none to cross my path. Once for all, I, Margery, and Ann with me, are going forth to the land of Egypt in Kubbeling's company, and to Cairo itself!"

The worthy old woman gave a scream, and while the Brunswicker shut the dining-hall door, that we might not be heard, she broke out, with glowing eyes, beside herself with wrath: "Verily and indeed! So that is your purpose! Thanks be to the Virgin, to say and to do are not one and the same, far from it. Do you conceive that you hold all love for those two youths yonder in sole fief or lease? As though others were not every whit as ready as you to give their best to save them. A head that runs at a wall cracks its skull! Maids should never touch matters which do not beseem them! What next for a skittle-witted fancy! — That it should have come into the brain of a Schopper is no marvel, but Ann, prudent Ann! Would any man have dreamed of such a thing in our young days, Master Cousin? There they stand, two well-

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born Nuremberg damsels, who have never been suffered to go next door alone after *Ave Maria!* And they are fain to cross the seas to a dark outlandish place, into the very jaws of the dreadful Heathen who butcher Christian people!" Whereupon she clapped her hands and laughed aloud, albeit not from her heart, and then raved on: "At least is it a new thing, and the first time that the like hath ever been heard of in Nuremberg!"

If the whole of the holy Roman Empire had risen up to make resistance and to mock us, it would have failed to move Ann or me, and I answered, loud and steadfast: "Everything right and good that ever was done in Nuremberg, my heart's beloved Cousin, was done there once for the first time; and it is right and good that we should go, and we mean to do it!" Whereupon Cousin Maud drew back in disgust and amazement, and gazed from one to the other of us with enquiring eyes, and as wondering a face as though she were striving to rede some dark riddle. Then her vast bosom began to heave up and down, and we, who knew her, could not fail to perceive that somewhat great and strange was moving her. And whereas she presently shook her heavy head to and fro, and set her fists hard on her hips, I looked for a sudden and dreadful storm, and my Uncle Conrad likewise gazed her in the face with expectant fear; yet it was long in breaking forth. What then was my feeling when, at last, she took her hands from her sides and struck her right hand in her left palm so that it rang again, and burst

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forth eagerly, albeit with roguish good humor and tearful eyes: "If indeed everything good and right that ever was done in Nuremberg must have once been done there for the first time, our good town shall now see that a grey-headed old woman with gout in her toes can sail over seas, from the Pegnitz even to the land of the barbarian Heathen and Cairo! Your hand on it, Young Kubbeling, and yours, Maidens. We will be fellow-travellers. Signed and sealed. Strew sand on it!"

Hereupon Ann, who was wont to be still, shrieked loudly and cast herself first on my cousin's neck and then on mine and then on my uncle's; he indeed stood as though deeply offended, as likewise did my good godfather Christian. Yet they would not speak, that they might not mar our joy, albeit Uncle Pfinzing growled forth that our plan was sheer youthful folly, wilfulness, and the like. "At any rate it is an unlaid egg, so long as my wife has not added mustard to the peppered broth," Uncle Conrad declared, and he departed to carry tidings to my aunt of what mad folly these women's heads had brewed.

Even Kubbeling shook his head, albeit he spoke not, inasmuch as he knew that it was hard to contend with the powers beyond seas.

He and Cousin Maud had ever been on terms of good-fellowship with Uncle Christian, but to-day my uncle was ill to please; neither look nor word had he for his heart's darling, Ann; and when he presently recovered somewhat, he stormed around, with so red a

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face and such furious ire that we feared lest he should have another dizzy stroke, saying "that Kubbeling and Cousin Maud might be ashamed of themselves, inasmuch as they were old enough to know better and were acting like a pair of young madcaps." And thus he went on, till it was overmuch for the Brunswicker's endurance, and on a sudden he cried out in great wrath that that he had promised was in truth not wise, forasmuch as that he would gain nought but mischief thereby, yet that it concerned him alone and he took it all on himself, although Master Pfinzing might yet ask for why and to what end he should risk a hurt by it, whereas, to his knowledge, the ill-starred Junker Schopper could be little more to him than the man in the moon. He was wont, quoth he, to take good care not to risk his skin for other folks, but in this matter it seemed to him not too dear a bargain. Neither the stoutest will nor the strongest fist might avail against Mistress Ursula, the veriest witch in all the land of Egypt; a better head was needed for that, than the heavy brain-pan which God Almighty had set on his short neck, and yet he had sworn to bring her knavery to nought. Our faithful hearts and shrewd heads would be the aid he needed. He trusted to Cousin Maud to dare to dance with old Nick himself, if need should arise. And he was man enough to protect us all three. And now Master Pfinzing knew all about it and, if he yet craved to hear more, he would find him among the birds, whereas Uhlwurm was to depart on his way with them that very day, without him.

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And he turned his back on my uncle, and quitted the chamber with a heavy tread; but he turned on the threshold and cried: "Yet keep your lips from telling what you have in your mind, Master, and in especial to those who are at their meal in there, as touching that Tetzel-adder; for the wind flies over seas faster than we can."

While he spoke thus Uncle Christian had recovered his temper, and he followed after Kubbeling with such a haste as his huge body would allow, nor was it to quarrel with him any more.

The rest, who had sat at breakfast, had by good hap heard nought of our disputing, by reason that Master Windecke had so much new matter for discourse that every ear hung on his words; and he, again, forgot to eat while he talked. In Cousin Maud, indeed, as she hearkened to my godfather's wrathful speech, certain doubts had arisen; yet even stronger resistance would never have turned her aside from anything she deemed truly good and right; howbeit she was more than willing to leave it to us to settle matters with Aunt Jacoba. We went up-stairs to her, and at her chamber door our courage failed us, inasmuch as we could hear through the door my uncle's angry speech, and that laugh which my aunt was wont to utter when aught came to her ears which she was not fain to hear.

"And if she were to say No?" said I to Ann.

Hereupon a right sorrowful and painful cloud overspread her face, and it was in a dejected tone that she

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answered me that then indeed all must be at an end, and her fondest hopes nipped, by reason that she owed more to Mistress Waldstromer than ever she could repay, and whatsoever she might undertake against her will would of a certainty come to no good end. And we heard my aunt's laugh again; but then I took heart, and raised the latch, and Ann led the way into the chamber.

Howbeit, if we had cherished the smallest hope without, within it failed us wholly. As we went in my uncle was standing close by my aunt; his back was towards us, and he saw us not; but his mien alone showed us that he was wroth and provoked: his voice quaked as he cried aloud with a shrug of his shoulders and his hand uplifted: "Such a purpose is sheer madness and most unseemly!"

Then, when for the third time I coughed to make our presence known to him, he turned his red face towards us, and cried out in great fury: "Here you are to answer for yourselves; and come what may, this at least shall be said: 'If mischief comes of it, I wash my hands in innocence!'"

Whereupon he went in all haste to the door and had lifted his hand to slam it to, when he minded him of his beloved wife's sick health and gently shut it and softly dropped the latch.

We stood in front of Aunt Jacoba, and could scarce believe our eyes and ears when she opened wide her arms and, with beaming eyes, cried in a voice of glad

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content: "Come, come to my heart, children! Oh, you good, dear, brave maids! Why, why am I so old, so fettered, so sick a creature? Why may I not go with you?"

At her first words we had fallen on our knees by her side, and she fervently clasped our heads to her bosom, kissed our lips and foreheads, and cried, with over-streaming eyes: "Yes, children, yes! It is brave, and the right way; Courage and true love are not dead in the hearts of the women of Nuremberg. Ah, and how many a time have I imagined that I might myself rise and fly after my froward, dear, unduteous exile, my own Götz, be he where he may, over mountains and seas to the ends of the earth! — I, a hapless, suffering skeleton! Yet what is denied to the old, the young may do, and the Virgin and all the Saints shall guard you! And Kubbeling, Young-Kubbeling, that bravest, truest Seyfried! Bring him up to speak with me. So rough and so good! — My old man, to be sure, must storm and rave, but then his feeble and sickly nobody of a little wife can wind him round her finger. Leave him to me, and be sure you shall win his blessing."

After noon Uhlwurm and the waggon of birds set forth to Frankfort, where Kubbeling's eldest son was tarrying to meet his father with fresh falcons. Or ever the grim old grey-beard mounted his horse, he whispered to Ann: "Truest of maidens, find some device to move Seyfried to take me in your fellowship to the land of Egypt, and I will work a charm which shall of a surety give your lover back to you, if indeed he is

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not. . . ." and he was about to cry "gone" as was his wont; yet he refrained himself and spoke it not.

Young Kubbeling tarried at the Forest-lodge; and as for my uncle, it was soon plain enough that my aunt had been in the right in the matter; nay, when we went home to the city, meseemed as though he and his wife had from the first been of one mind. Our purpose pleased him better as he learned to believe more surely that our little women's wits would peradventure be able to find his wandering son, and to tempt him to return to his father's forest home.

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CHAPTER XII.

We carefully obeyed Kubbeling's counsel that we should keep our purpose dark, and it remained hidden even from the guests at the lodge. On the other hand they had been told all that Herdegen's letter had contained, and that it was Ursula who was pursuing him with such malignant spite. Yet albeit we bound over each one to hold his peace on the matter in Nuremberg, no woman, nor perchance no man either, could keep such strange doings privy from near kith and kin; and whereas we might not tell what in truth it was which stood in the way of our brothers' homecoming, it was rumored among our cousins and gossips that some vast and unattainable sum was needed to ransom the two young Schoppers. And other marvellous reports got abroad, painting my brother's slavery in terrible colors.

At first this made me wroth, but presently it provoked me less, inasmuch as that great compassion was aroused; and those very citizens and dames who of old were wont to chide Herdegen as a limb of Satan, and would have gladly seen him led to the gallows, now remembered him otherwise. Yea, fellow-feeling hath kindly eyes, widely open to all that is good, and

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willing to be shut to all that is evil, and so it came to pass that the noble gifts of the poor slave now lost to the town, were lauded to the skies. Hereupon came a letter from my lord Cardinal with these tidings of good comfort: that he was willing to administer extreme unction to my grand-uncle Im Hoff, if his life should be in peril when his eminence returned from England. Our next letters were, by his order, to find him at Brussels, and when old Dame Pernhart had given her consent to our journeying to the land of Egypt — whereas Aunt Jacoba held her wisdom and shrewd wit in high honor, — and had moved her son and Dame Giovanna to do likewise, Ann wrote a long letter to my lord Cardinal, the venerable head of the Pernhart family, setting forth in touching words for what cause and to what end she had dared so bold a venture. She besought his aid and blessing, and declared that the inward voice, which he had taught her to obey, gave her assurance that the purpose she had in hand was pleasing in the eyes of God and the Virgin.

I, for my part, could never have writ so fair a letter; and how calmly would Ann now fulfil the duties of each day, while Cousin Maud, albeit her feet scarce might carry her, was here, there, and everywhere, like a Will-o'-the-Wisp.

Ann it was who first conceived the idea of going with Young Kubbeling to the Fütterers' house and there making enquiries as to the roads to Genoa, and also concerning the merchants who might there be found ready and willing to ship his falcons for sale in Alexan-

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dria; inasmuch as that it was only by journeying in a galleon which sailed not from Venice that we could escape Ursula's spies; and that Kubbeling should suffer loss through us we could by no means allow. And whereas old Master Fütterer himself was now in Nuremberg, he declared himself willing to buy the birds on account of his own house, at the same price as the traders in Venice; nor was the Brunswicker any whit loth, forasmuch as that he might presently get a better price on the Lido, when it should be known that he had other ways and means at his command. Also the journey by Genoa gave us this advantage: that we were bound to no time or season. Old Master Fütterer pledged himself to find a ship at any time when Kubbeling should need it.

Whereas we purposed to set forth in the middle of December, we went to the forest-lodge early in that month, and as it was with me at that time, so, for sure, must it be with the swallows and the nightingales or ever they fly south over mountains and seas. Never had the pure air been sweeter, never had I looked forward to the future with greater hope and strength or higher purpose. And my feeble, sickly Aunt Jacoba, meseemed, was likeminded with me. In spirit, ever eager, she was with us already in that distant region, and albeit of old she ever had preferred Ann above me, now on a sudden the tables were turned; she could never see enough of me, and when at last Ann was fain to go home to town with Uncle Christian, she besought so pressingly that I would stay with her that I was

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bound to yield; and indeed I was well content to tarry there, the forest being now in all its glory.

The daintiest lace was hung over the frosted trees. They had been dipped, meseemed, in melted silver and crystal, and the whole forest was broidered over with shining enamel and thickly strewn with clear diamond sparks. And how brightly everything glittered when the sun rose up from the morning mist, and blazed down on all this glory from a blue sky! At night the moon lighted up the frosted forest with a softer and more loving ray, and till a late hour I would gaze forth at it, or up at the starry vault where the shooting stars came flying across from the dark blue deep. Now it is well-known to many who are still in their green youth that, whensoever it befalls that we are in the act of thinking of some heartfelt wish just as a star falls, it is sure of fulfilment; and behold, on the very next night, as I was gazing upwards and wondering in my heart whether indeed we might be able to rescue my brothers, and to find my Cousin Götz as his sick mother so fervently hoped, a bright star fell, as it were right in front of me. Whereupon I went to bed in such good cheer and so sure of myself as I have rarely felt before or since that night.

And next morning, as I went to my aunt in high spirits and happy mood, she perceived that some good hap had befallen me. Then, when I had told her what I had had in my mind as the star fell which, as little children believe, is dropped from the hand of an angel blinded by the glory of Almighty God, she looked me

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in the face with a sad smile and bid me sit down by her side. And she took my hand in hers and opened her heart so wide as she had never done till this hour. It was plain to see that she had long been biding her time for this full and free discourse, and she confessed that she had never shown me such love and care as were indeed my due. The mere sight of me had ever hurt the open wound, inasmuch as long ago, or ever I first went to school, her fondest hopes had been set on me. She had looked on me ever as her only son's future wife, and Götz himself had been of the same mind, whereas in his boyhood, and even when his beard was coming, he loved nought better than little Margery in her red hood.

And she reminded me now of many a kind act her son had done me, and how that once on a time, when my lord the High Constable had bidden him with other lads to Kadolzburg,* which she and my uncle took as a great honor, he had said, No, he would not go from home, by reason that Cousin Maud was to come that day and bring me with her. Whereupon arose his first sharp dispute with his parents, and when my uncle threatened that he would carry him thither by force he had stolen away into the woods, and stayed all night with some bee-keeper folk, and not come home till midday on the morrow, when it was too late to ride to the Castle in good time. To punish him for this he was

* A country lodge belonging to the High Constables of the city of Nuremberg, and their favorite resort, even after they had became Electors of Brandenburg. It was at about three miles and a half west of the town.

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locked up; but hearing my voice below he had let himself down by the gutter-pipe, seized my hand, and ran away to the woods with me, nor did he come back till Ave Maria. And hereupon he was soundly thrashed, albeit he was even then a great lad and of good counsel in all matters.

My uncle's wrath at that time had dwelt in my mind, but my share in the matter was new to me and brought the color to my face. Howbeit, I deemed it might have been better if my aunt had never told me; for though it was indeed good to hear and gladdened my soul, yet it would hinder me from looking Götz freely in the face if by good hap I should meet him.

Then she went on to tell me in full all that had befallen my cousin until he had gone forth to wander. When they had parted in wrath, he had written to her from the town to say that if she were steadfast in her displeasure he should seek a new home for himself and his sweetheart in a far country; and she had sent him a letter to tell him that her arms were ever open to receive him, but that rather than suffer the only son and heir of the old and noble race of Waldstromer to throw himself away on a craftsman's daughter, she would never more set eyes on him whom she loved with all her heart. Never more, and she swore it by the Saviour's wounds with the crucifix in her hand, should his parents' doors be opened to him unless he gave up the coppersmith's daughter and besought his mother's pardon.

And now the sick old woman bewailed her stern

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hardness and her over-hasty oath with bitter tears; Götz had been faithful to his Gertrude in despite of her letter, and when, three years later, the tidings reached him that his sweetheart had pined away for grief and longing, and departed this life with his name on her lips, he had written in the wild anguish of his young soul that, now Gertrude was dead, he had nought more to crave of his parents; and that whereas his mother had sworn with her hand on the image of the Saviour never to open her doors to him till he had renounced his sweet, pure love, he now made an oath not less solemn and binding, by the image of the Crucified Christ, that he would never turn homewards till she bid him thither of her own free will, and owned that she repented her of that innocent maid's early death, whereas there was not her like among all the noble maidens of Nuremberg, whatever their names might be.

This letter I read myself, and I plainly saw that these twain had sadly marred their best joy in life by over-hasty ire. Albeit, I knew full well how stubborn a spirit was Aunt Jacoba's, I nevertheless strove to move her to send a letter to her son bidding him home; yet she would not, though she bewailed herself sorely.

"Only one thing of those he requires of me can I in all truth grant him," quoth she. "If you find him, you may tell him that his mother sends her fondest blessing, and assure him of my heart's deepest devotion; nay, and let him understand that I am pining

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with longing for him, and that I obey his will inasmuch as that I truly mourn the death of his beloved; for that is verily the truth, the Virgin and the Saints be my witness. Yet I may not and I will not open my doors to him till he has craved my forgiveness, and if I did so he must think of his own mother as a perjured woman."

Hereupon I showed her — and my eyes overflowed — that his oath stood forth as against her oath, and that one was as weighty as the other in the sight of the Most High.

"Set aside that cruel vow, my dear aunt," cried I "I will make any pilgrimage with you, and I know full well that no penance will seem overhard to you."

"No, no, of a surety, Margery, no!" she replied with a groan. "And the Chaplain said the like to me long ago; and yet I feel in my heart that you and he are in the wrong. An oath sworn by Christ's wounds! — Moreover I am the elder and his mother, he is the younger and my son. It is his part to come to me, and if he then shall make a pilgrimage it shall be to Rome and the Holy Sepulchre. He has time before him in which to do any penance the Holy Church may require of him. I — I would lay me on the rack only to see him once more, I would fast and scourge myself till my dying day; but I am his mother, and he is my son, and it is his part to take the first step, not mine who bore him."

How warmly I urged her again and again, and how often was she on the point of yielding to her heart's

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loud outcry! Yet she ever came back to the same point: that it ill-beseemed her to be the first to put forth her hand, albeit her every feeling drove her to it.

The letters sent to Götz had reached him through a merchant's house in Venice. This his parents knew, and they had long since charged Kunz to inquire where he dwelt. Yet had his pains been for nought, inasmuch as the banished youth had forbidden the traders to tell any one, whosoever might ask. Howbeit my uncle had implored his son in many a letter to mind him of his mother's sickness, and come home; and in his answers Götz had many a time given his parents assurance of his true and loving devotion; yet had he kept his oath, and tarried beyond seas. These letters likewise did my aunt show me, and while I read them she charged me to make it my duty not to quit that merchant's house and to take no rest until I had learned where her son was dwelling: saying that what an Italian might deny to a man a fair young maiden might yet obtain of him.

It was not yet dusk when Master Ulsenius came and broke off our discourse. He had come forth in part to see Eppelein, and presently, when a lamp was brought, as we stood by the faithful lad he called me by name, and then Uncle Conrad, and said that albeit he was weary of limb he was easy and comfortable; that he felt a smart now and then, and in especial about his neck, yet that troubled him but little, inasmuch as that it plainly showed him that the thought

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which had haunted him, that he was really killed and in a darksome hell, was but a horrible dream.

Then when he had spoken thus much, with great pains, his pale face turned red on a sudden, and again he asked, as he had many times in his sickness, where was his master's letter. Hereupon I hastily told him that we had hunted down the robbers and rescued it, and it was a joy to see how much comfort and delight this was to him. And when he had swallowed a good cup of strong Malvoisie, he could sit up, and enquired if the Baron von Im Hoff were minded to satisfy the Sultan's over-great demand. And to this I replied, to give him easement, that we had good reason to hope so. And was his mind now clear enough to enable him to remember how great a sum was demanded for ransom?

He smiled craftily, and said that even as a dead man he could scarce have forgotten that, by reason that he had muttered the words to himself on his way oftener than any old monk mumbles his *Paternoster*. And when Uncle Conrad laughed and bid him jestingly repeat it, he said, like a school boy who is sure of his task: "For Master Herdegen Schopper, slave of the said unbeliever Abou Sêf,* in the armory of Sultan Burs Bey in the Castle of Cairo, a ransom is demanded of twenty-four thousand Venice sequins. George — Christina! Death and fire on the head of the misbelieving wretch!"

When we heard this we all believed that he had of

* Father of the scimitar.

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a surety been wrong as to the sum or the coin, likewise we thought his last strange words were due to a wandering mind; howbeit, we were soon to learn that verily his tidings were the truth. He forthwith went on to say with some pains that his master had made him to use a means by which he might remember the number from all others in case, by ill-hap, the letter should be lost. And on this wise he gave us to know for certain that the vast sum demanded was not an error on his part. It was to this end that he had stamped on his memory the names of Saint George and Saint Christina, whose days in the calendar are on the 24th of April and the 24th of July, and the number of thousands named for the ransom was likewise four and twenty. Also Herdegen had bid him think of twice the twelve apostles, and of the twenty-four hours from midnight till midnight again. It would seem beyond belief to most folks, he said, yet it was indeed twenty-four thousand, and not hundred, sequins which that devilish Sultan has asked, as indeed we must know from the letter. Presently, when he had rested a while, we made him tell us more, and we learned that the Sultan had been minded to set Herdegen free without price, and he would have had him led forthwith to the imprisoned King Janus of Cyprus, to whom he thought he might thus do a pleasure, but that Ursula Tetzel, who was standing by with her husband, had whispered to the Sultan that she would not see him robbed of a great profit forasmuch as that yonder Christian slave — and she pointed to my brother — was of one of the richest

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families of her native town, who could pay a royal ransom for him and find it no great burthen; and that the same was true of Sir Franz, who was likewise to have been set free. Hereupon the Sultan, who at all times lacked moneys, notwithstanding the heavy tribute he levied on all merchandise, commanded that Herdegen and the Bohemian should be led away again and then he asked this overweening ransom. Then Ursula took upon herself of her own free will to send tidings of the Sultan's demands to the slaves' kith and kin, and of her deep malice had never done so.

That evening we might not hear how and on what authority Eppelein knew all this, for much talking had wearied him. All we could then learn was that it was Ursula, and none other, whom the lad would still speak of as the She-devil, who had plotted the snare which had well nigh cost my other brother his life. Yet had he left him so far amended that he, Eppelein, would be glad to be no worse.

Albeit these tidings of Kunz were good to cheer us, our hopes of ransoming Herdegen were indeed far away, or rather in the realm of nevermore; even if my grand-uncle were possessed of so great a sum, it was a question whether he would be willing to pay it; and as for us, we could never have raised it at the cost of all our fortune. At that time the Venice sequin and Nuremberg gulden were not far asunder in value, and what the sum of twenty-four thousand gulden meant any man may imagine when I say that, no more than twelve years sooner, the liberty of coining for the

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whole city was granted by the Emperor Sigismund to Herdegen Valzner for four thousand Rhenish gulden; and that Master Ulman Stromer purchased his fine dwelling-house behind the chapel of Our Lady, with the houses pertaining thereto, and his share in the Rigler's house for two thousand eight hundred gulden. For such a sum as was demanded a whole street in Nuremberg might have been sold; nay, the great castle of Malmsbach on the Pegnitz would lately have been bought by the city for a thousand Rhenish gulden, but that Master Ulrich Rummel, whose it was, would not part with it. And we were now required to pay the price of two dozen such strongholds! It was indeed an unheard-of and devilish extortion; and when Kubbeling came to hear of it he turned his wild-cat-skin pocket inside out, and fell to raging and storming.

Aunt Jacoba turned pale when she heard the great sum named, and she likewise was of opinion that old Im Hoff, who had of late been spending much money in vows and foundations, would never give forth so vast a sum. The richest families in Nuremberg might be moved to pay fifty, and at the most a hundred gulden for the ransom of a Christian and a fellow-countryman, but if even twenty might be found so open-handed, which was not to be looked for, and if my godfather Christian Pfinzing, and the Waldstromers, and the Hallers should do their utmost, and we should give the greater part of all our possessions, we could scarce make it up to twenty-four thousand sequins if my grand-uncle did not help.

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Thus after a day of hope came a first night of despairing, and many another must follow, and I was to know once more that misfortunes never come singly.

I had hoped of a surety to speak with Eppelein once more or ever I departed at noon, and to ask him of many matters; howbeit, when I went up to his chamber Master Ulsenius met me with a face of care and told me that the poor fellow was again wandering in his wits. When I presently went forth from the house, a bee-keeper's waggon was slowly moving from the court-yard. The housewife waved her hand, and from beneath the tilt the face of Dame Henneleinlein looked at me with a scornful grin. Since her evil demeanor at the Pernharts' they had closed their house on her, and when she had dared once to go to the Schopperhof, thence likewise had she been shut out, and thus she felt no good-will towards us. Now when I enquired of the housekeeper what might be the end and reason for this visit, the woman hid beneath her apron a jar of honey which the old dame had given her as a sweetmeat for the children; and she gave me to understand that the worthy lady had come forth to the forest to collect her widow's dues of honey, and had tarried on her way for a little friendly discourse. But methought that "little" must have had some strange meaning, inasmuch as the housewife's withered cheeks were of the color of a robin's breast. Hereupon I threatened her with my finger, and enquired of her whether she had not betrayed more to the evil-tongued

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old woman than she ought, but she eagerly denied the charge.

My ride home to the town after noon was not altogether a pleasant one, by reason that icy rain poured from heaven in streams, mingled with snow. The further we went the worse the roads were, and yet when my companions turned at the city-gate to ride homewards again, a strange, fierce confidence came upon me. Whether it were that the wet which ran off from me and my stout horse had singularly refreshed me, or whether it was the steadfast purpose I had set as I rode along, to risk my all to the end that I might redeem my brethren, I know not. But to this hour I mind me that, as I rode in through the dark streets, my heart beat high with contentment, and that had I been such another man as Herdegen I might have been ready enough to pick a quarrel with the first who should have said me nay.

Thus I fared on past my grand-uncle's house; there I beheld from afar a lighted lantern, as it were a glow-worm at midsummer, moving along the street, and when I perceived that it was none other than old Henneleinlein who carried it, I put my horse, which till now had been wading through the mire step by step, to a swift gallop, as fast as he might go, and the serving-man behind me, passing close by her. And what simple glee was mine when our horses splashed the old woman from head to foot, inasmuch as I wist for certain that she could have stolen to my grand-uncle's house at that late hour to no end but to reveal whatso-

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ever she might have picked up from her friend and gossip at the forest-lodge.

Thus I reached home in better cheer than I had hoped; and when Susan told me that Cousin Maud was in the kitchen ordering the supper, I crept up-stairs, hastily changed my wet raiment, sent forth my man to tell Ann that she was to come to me, and then, in the best chamber, I fetched forth the elecampane wine which I had ever found the best remedy when my cousin needed some strength. Nor was my care in vain; for when I had told her, little by little, as it were in small doses, all the tidings I had heard yesterday, and ended with the great and cruel price demanded by the Sultan, she shrieked aloud and clasped her hands to her heart in such wise that I was verily in great fear. Then the elecampane wine did good service; yet was it not till she had drunk of it many times that her tongue spoke plainly again. And presently, when she was able to wag it, it went on for a long time with no pause nor rest, in sheer impatience and godless railing.

When she had thus relieved her mind, she began pacing up and down the floor on one and the same plank, like a lion in its cage, and to call to mind, one by one, all our earthly possessions, and to reckon at how we might attain to selling it for gold. The whole sum was not much to comfort us, for her worldly estate, like that of the Waldstromers, was in land, and in these days of peril from the Hussites it was hard enough to sell landed property, and her best por-

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tion was in meads and pasture and a few vineyards near Würzburg.

It was from the first her fixed intent, as though it were a matter of course, to give everything she had, down to her jewels; and whereas she conceived, and rightly, that for Herdegen's sake I should be like-minded, she asked me no questions but added to it in her mind, the Schopper jewels which had come to me from my father and mother, and then began to count and reckon. It might perchance come to so much as eleven thousand sequins if we sold all we had to sell; yet our inheritance lay in Chancery, and, as she knew full well, not a farthing thereof might be given up but with the full and well-proven authority of Herdegen and Kunz. Nor might I even have that which was mine own, by reason that our inheritance had never been shared, and our houses and lands had not been valued at a price. Thus I must have long patience or ever I came by my own; all the more so whereas the gentlemen of the Chancery were required to answer for the wealth of orphans in their keeping with their own.

Hereupon we again thought of my grand-uncle, and Cousin Maud declared that he would of a certainty be ready to pay half the required ransom for a purpose so pleasing in the eyes of God, and that the other half might be raised by the help of our friends. Then she was fain to think of the future. And the longer she did so, even when Ann had come to us and had been told all our tidings, the better cheer she showed; nay, it might have been conceived that it would be a far more

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easy and delightful matter to live in narrow poverty than in superfluous riches, and thereupon she put me in mind how that many a time, when the men-folks were away from home, she and I had been content to make good cheer with some sweet porridge, and had very gladly dined without flesh-meat, which was so costly. We should be free from the vexation of so many serving-men and wenches; and whereas of late she had been forced to turn Brigitta out of the house, had she not herself scarce escaped a fever from sheer worry of mind. Susan would ever be true to us; she would be ready to share our poverty with us, and the unresting up-stairs and down had long been a torment to her old feet.

The *Magister* was a well-disposed man, and if he found it an over-hard matter to depart from us we might very gladly let him board with us, if he could be content to live with us in her little house in the Grass-market, in which Rosmüller now dwelt. There was no lack of good home-spun cloth in Nuremberg; nay, and if we should never again have new garments that would be all the better for our souls' health. As for me, I might perchance have fewer suitors, but if one should pay his court to me, he would have no thought but for Margery, and how she looked and moved. Nay, take it for all in all, we owed much thanks to Ursula and the reprobate heathen Sultan if we were by their means brought low from ill-starred wealth and ease to God-pleasing poverty.

Ann was far less horror-struck at the fearful sum of

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the ransom than we had been, by reason that she was ever possessed by the assurance that Heaven had created her and Herdegen for each other, and would bring them together at last.

Moreover she had good cause to build her hopes on my grand-uncle's help. In a letter from the Cardinal to her he said that now, as of old, he could only counsel her to follow the voice of her heart; that he would put no hindrance in the way of our departing, albeit he urgently prayed us to put it off till after his homecoming, which should now be in a short space. She was to let Baron Im Hoff know that he was ready to do his will, albeit he hoped at his coming to find him in mended health. She had forthwith carried these good tidings to my grand-uncle, and they had so uplifted and comforted his heart that verily it seemed as though my lord Cardinal's good hopes might find fulfilment. And this very morning she had seen him, and a right strange mind had come over him; he had enquired of her straitly, and as though it was to him a great matter, all that she could tell him of my lord Cardinal's way of life, of the duties of his office and the like; and whereas she answered him that of all these matters she knew but little, yet had she heard from his own mouth that his eminence was bound in thankfulness to his Holiness the Pope, by reason that he had made him to be high Almoner of the Papal treasury and thus put it into his power to do many good works; and this she deemed, had brought great easement to my grand-uncle. Then when she rose to depart from him, he

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had sent his serving-man to bid Master Holzschuher, the notary, to come to him, and to bring with him two trustworthy witnesses duly sworn to secrecy. As he bid her farewell he had laughed, and whispered to her that his Eminence the Cardinal would be well-content with old Im Hoff, yea, and she likewise, and her lover.

All this gave us matter for thought, and also gave us good heart; only it weighed upon our souls that our departing was not to be yet for some weeks.

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CHAPTER XIII.

NEXT morning Cousin Maud let me see in a right pleasant way how truly she was in earnest in the matter of thrift henceforth; she would take but one small pat of butter from the country wench who brought it, she sent away the butcher's man and would have no flesh meat, and at breakfast she abstained from butter on her bread, as she was wont to eat it. Likewise the chain and the great gold pin which she ever wore from morning till night, flashing on her bosom like a watchman's lantern, were now laid aside, and while I was eating my porridge she showed me the coffer wherein she had bestowed all she possessed of rings, pins, and the like, which she would presently take to the weigh-house to be weighed and then to a goldsmith to be valued. Howbeit, when I was fain to do likewise with my jewels she would not have it so, inasmuch as youth, quoth she, needed such bravery, and first we must learn how great a portion of the ransom my grand-uncle would take upon himself to pay.

Hereupon, in fulfilment of my purpose yestereve, I made it my hard duty to carry the evil tidings to the old Baron, and humbly to remind him of his promise to take care for Herdegen's ransom. It was raining

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heavily, and a wet west wind whistled along the miry streets. It was weariful to wade through them, and when at last I reached the Im Hoff house Master Ulsenius called to me down the stairs: "Silence, Mistress Margery; there is worse weather in here than without doors!"

Thus as I went into the overheated chamber, I saw there was no good to be hoped for: yet were matters worse than I had looked to find them. So soon as my grand-uncle set eyes on me he frowned darkly, his hollow eyes had an angry glare and, without answering my good-day, he croaked at me: "You hoped that the old man might have passed away into eternity or ever you set forth on your wild adventure? Hah, hah! But you are mistaken. I shall yet be granted time enough to show you whom you have to deal with, as it has likewise been enough to show me what you truly are! Whereas I trusted to have found a faithful and wise brain, what have I seen? Loveless and malignant privity, miserable folly, and such schemes as might have been dreamed of in a mad-house!"

"But, uncle, only hearken," I tried to say, and forthwith the idea fell into my mind, which I afterwards found to be a true one, that either Henneleinlein, had yestereve betrayed to him or to her gossip his housekeeper, all she had heard at the Forest Lodge. He would not suffer me to speak to the end, but went on to chide and complain, and broke in again and again, even when at last I found words and made it plain to him that we had kept our purpose privy from him to

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no end but to save him from grieving so long as we might; and albeit he might be wroth with us, yet he must grant that heretofore we had ever been modest and seemly maidens; but now, when it was a matter of life and freedom for those who were nearest and dearest to our hearts. . . .

Here he broke in with scornful laughter, and cried out that he, for his part, might not indeed hope to be numbered among those chosen few. He had ever known full well that when we did him any Samaritan service it had been to no end save to draw from his purse the money to ransom my brothers and Ann's lover. Every kind word had been pure lies and falseness; yea, and worse than either of us were that crafty witch out in the forest, and the old scarecrow who made boast of having been as a mother to me. Thus far had I suffered his railing in patience, but now it was too much for the hot blood of the Schoppers; I could refrain myself no longer, and broke out in great wrath and reproaches for so vile an accusation. If it were not that his age and infirmities claimed our compassion, I would, said I, after such evil treatment, desire of Ann that she should never more cross the threshold of a man who could so cruelly defame us, and those two good women to whom we owed so much.

I spoke right loudly, beside myself with rage, and my face aglow; nor was it till I marked that my uncle was staring at me as at some marvel that I recovered myself, and on a sudden held my peace, inasmuch as the thought flashed through my brain that I was deny-

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ing my brother even as Peter denied the Lord, albeit not indeed through any fear of man, but by giving way to my angered pride. Howbeit I had not long ceased when the stern old man cried out in pitiful entreaty.

"Nay, Margery, in the name of the Saints I pray you! You will not make Ann my foe. How hard-hearted you can be, and how wroth, and against an old man sick unto death on the edge of the grave! — what was it, in truth, that brought the bitter words to my tongue, but my care and fears for you, who are verily and indeed my only comfort and all I have to love on earth? And now when I say again: I will not suffer you to depart. I will sacrifice all, everything to keep you from running into certain death, will you even then threaten to leave me alone in my misery, and to beguile Ann to desert me likewise?"

Hereupon I spoke him fair and as lovingly as in truth I might, and pledged my word that Ann should not set foot without the city gates or ever my lord Cardinal had come into them, and had given him the comfort of his blessing. And then he was of better cheer, and of his own free will he minded me of his promise to pay certain moneys for Herdegen's ransom; and all this he spoke full lovingly and my heart overflowed with true and fervent thankfulness, so that I took his thin hand and kissed it. Howbeit, he knew not yet how great a sum was needed: and whereas I was about to prepare his mind for the worst, Ann came into the chamber, and as soon as my grand-uncle saw her he cried out in glad good cheer: "Thank God,

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sweet maid, all is peace between us again. You forego your mad purpose, and I — I will pay the ransom."

At this Ann flew to his side and thanked him, with overflowing eyes, and little by little we led him on, till he cried out: "Well, well, children, they surely cannot set the price of a kingdom on that young scapegrace Schopper's head!"

So Ann took courage, and told him that Ursula had, of her deep malice, declared that Herdegen was one of the richest youths of Germany, and that by reason of this the Sultan had demanded the great price of twenty-four thousand sequins.

The truth was out; I marvelled to mark that my grand-uncle was not dismayed as I had looked to see him; nay, but he laughed aloud and said: "That would indeed be somewhat new and strange! You children would ever rack your brains over the Italian poets rather than over matters of mine and thine, albeit that is the axis on which the world turns. There would, in truth, be no justice in so vast a sum, but that in the markets of Egypt they reckon in Venice sequins with none but the Franks; nigh upon thirteen of their dirhems go to the gold sequin, and thus we have — let me reckon — the old trader has not forgotten his skill on his sick-bed — we have one thousand eight hundred and forty and six sequins; and that is a vast ransom still such as is never paid but for lords of the highest degree. Four and twenty thousand sequins!" And again he laughed aloud. "It is easily spoken, children, but you cannot even guess what it would mean. Believe me

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when I tell you that many a well-to-do merchant in Nuremberg, who is at the head of a fine trade, would be at his wits' end if he were desired to pay down half of your four and twenty thousand sequins in hard coin!"

Then I took up my parable and told him how Eppelein had stamped the sum on his mind, and that he for certain was in the right, both as to the sum and as to the Venice sequins, forasmuch as that Herdegen, to the end that he might know it rightly, had told him that they should be ducats such as he had three in a red stuff wrapper, and Kunz and I likewise each two, in our money-boxes as christening-gifts.

Now while I thus spoke the old man was sorely troubled, and his wax-white face turned paler at each word. He raised himself up, leaning on the arms of the great chair, so high that we were filled with amazement, and he gazed about him with his glassy eyes and then said, still holding himself up: "That, that.... And yesterday, only yesterday.... The captive himself.... Four and twenty thousand sequins, do you say?.... and I — oh, what were my words?.... But what old Im Hoff promises that he will do.... And yet.... If you maids had but been duteous children, if you had but come to me first, as trustful daughters.... Only yesterday I might — Yes, perchance I might...." And then he stormed forth: "But who is there indeed to care for me? Who ever comes nigh me with true love and honest trustfulness? Not one, no, not one!.... Ursula — the lad whom from an infant — and you — both of you, what

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have you done? .... Yesterday, only yesterday! .... But to-day .... Four and twenty thousand sequins!"

His arms on a sudden failed him, and he sank back in a deep swoon, his colorless face drooping on his shoulder. Now, while we did all in our power to revive him, and while one serving-man ran for the leech and another for the friar, meseemed that the old man's left side was strangely stiff and numb; yet the low flame of his feeble life was still burning.

Howbeit, when Master Ulsenius had let blood the old man opened his right eye; and when presently he was able to say: "Book," and then again "Book," we perceived by sundry signs that what he craved was water, and that he spoke one word for another. And thus it was till his chief confessor, Master Leonard Derrer, the reverend Prior of the Dominicans, came in with the sacristan, to administer to him extreme unction. But now, when the reverend Father came toward the dying man with the Body of the Lord, there was so dreadful and sorrowful a sight to be seen as I may never forget to my latter day. Instead of receiving that Holy Sacrament in all thankful humility, my grand-uncle thrust away my lord Prior — a white-bearded old man, of a venerable and commanding presence — with great fury and ungoverned rage, storming at him in strangely-mingled words, which for sure, he meant for others, but in a voice and with a mien which plainly showed that he would have nought of that Messenger of Grace. And from time to time he turned that eye he could use on Ann, and albeit he

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spoke one word for another, he made shift many times to repeat the Cardinal's name with impatient bidding, so that it was not hard to understand his meaning and his intent to receive the *Viaticum* from none other than that high prelate.

Howbeit, to us it seemed nothing less than treason to the dying man to interpret this to my lord Prior, in especial since my grand-uncle had, but now, shown us so much favor. Indeed we were moved to show him all loving kindness. Ann held his hand in hers, and whispered to him again and again that he should take patience, and that his Eminence was already on his way and would ere long be here. The reverend Prior showed indeed true Christian forbearance, thinking that the departing soul was more sorely troubled than was in truth the fact. He heeded not the old man's threats and struggles, but stood in silence at his post, and when presently the old Baron's hand dropped lifeless from Ann's grasp he sent us from the chamber.

We could hear through the door the good priest's voice in prayer and benediction, pronouncing absolution over the dying man, and at times my grand-uncle's wrathful tones, feeble indeed, but terrible to hear. Each time he broke in on the Prior's pious words we shuddered, and when at last the priest rang his little bell a great terror fell upon us, whereas this ordinance is wont to bring comfort and edification to the soul.

We had been on our knees some long space, praying fervently for that hapless, imperilled soul, when the

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door was opened, and my lord Prior declared in a loud voice that the noble Baron and Knight Sebald Im Hoff had made a good end after receiving the most holy Sacrament.

Then thought I, a good end peradventure, by the grace of Christ and the Virgin, but a peaceful end alas! by no means. And this might be seen even in the dead man's face. In later years, whensoever it has been my lot to gaze on the face of the dead, I have ever perceived that death hath lent them an aspect of peaceful calm so that the saying of common folk, that the Angel of Death hath kissed them is right fitting; but my grand-uncle's face was as that of a man whose dignity is broken by a mightier than he, and who hath suffered it in silent, gloomy rebellion.

With all our might and soul we prayed for him again and again; howbeit, as must ever befall, other cares came crowding in, to swallow up that one. As soon as the tidings of the old noble's death were rumored abroad, those who had known him in life came pouring in, and messengers from the town-council, notaries with sealing-wax and seals, priests for the burying, neighbors, and other good folk, and among them many friars and nuns. Lastly came Doctor Holzschuher of the council, my grand-uncle's notary, and one of our own father's most trusted friends, in all points a man of such worth and honesty that no words befit him so well as the Cardinal's saying: that he reminded him of an oak of the German forests.

When, now, this man, who in his youth had been

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one of the goodliest in all Nuremberg, and who was still of noble aspect with his long silver-grey hair lying on his shoulders — when he now greeted us maids well-nigh gloomily, and with no friendly beck or nod, we knew forthwith that he must have great and well-founded fears for our concerns. Yea, and so it was. Presently, when he had held grave discourse with the High Treasurer and the other chief men of the council, he called to him Cousin Maud and me, and told us that old Im Hoff's latest dealing was such, to all seeming, as to take from us all hope that our inheritance from him should help us to pay the ransom for Herdegen. And on the morrow his will would be opened and read and we should learn thereby in what way that old man had cared for those who were nearest and dearest to him.

Hereupon we had no choice but to bury many a fair hope in the grave; and notwithstanding this, we might owe no grudge to the departed; for albeit he had cared first and chiefly for the salvation of his own sinful soul, he nevertheless had taken thought to provide for my brothers and likewise for Ann and to keep the pledge he had given. Never in all his days — and this was confessed even by his enemies, of whom he had many — had he broken his word, and it was plain to be seen from all his instructions that the true cause of the deadly blow which had killed him was the sudden certainty that, by his own act, he had bereft himself of the power to redeem Herdegen by paying the ransom as he had promised.

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And this was my uncle's will:

When he had heard from Ann that my lord Cardinal was minded to hasten his home-coming and give him extreme unction, and had likewise had tidings that that high Prelate took great joy in his liberty of dealing with the Papal treasury for alms, he had bidden to him, that very evening, Doctor Holzschuher, his notary, and certain sworn witnesses, and had in all due form cancelled his former will, and in a fine new one had devised his estate as follows:

Ursula Tetzel was to have the five thousand gulden which he had promised her when he had unwittingly killed young Tetzel.

To Kunz he bequeathed the great trade both in Nuremberg and Venice, with all that pertained thereto and certain moneys in capital for carrying it on; likewise his fine dwelling-house, inasmuch as Herdegen would have our house for his own. And Kunz should be held bound to carry on the said trade in the same wise as my grand-uncle had done in his life-time, and pay out of it two-third parts of the profits to Herdegen and Ann; and that these two should wed was the dearest wish of his old age. Not a farthing was to be taken from the moneyed capital for twenty years to come, and this was expressly recorded; nor might the trade be sold, or cease to be carried on. If Kunz should die within that space, then he charged the head clerk of the house to conduct the business under the same pledge. And if and when Kunz should wed, then

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should he pay only half the profits to his brother instead of two-thirds.

The eldest son of Herdegen and Ann was to fall next heir to the business; but if this marriage came to nought, or they had no male issue, then Herdegen's son-in-law, or my son, or Kunz's.

Likewise he believed that he had made good provision for the maintenance of the young pair, inasmuch as though it could scarce be hoped that Herdegen would be able to take the lead of the trading house, yet his own fortune was not so great as to assure to Ann a life so free from burthens, and in all ways so easy as he desired for her, and as beseemed the mistress of so ancient a Nuremberg family.

His landed estates he had for the most part devised to the holy Church, and the remainder in equal halves to Herdegen and to me.

Three thousand gulden, which he had lent to the Convent of Vierzehnheiligen, and of which he might at any time require the repayment, he had set apart to ransom Herdegen and pay for his home-coming.

Of his possessions in hard coin, three thousand gulden were for Herdegen's share, and one thousand each for Ann and me as a bride-gift, and he had devised goodly sums of money to the hospitals and poor of the city, and the serving-folk and retainers of the household.

But then where was the great and well-nigh royal treasure of which old Im Hoff had, not so long since, been possessed; so that in the time of the Diet he had

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paid down in hard coin thirty thousand Hungarian ducats to buy himself a Baron's title? Master Holzschuher could tell us well enough. When that old man had once said to Ann that she could scarce believe how great profit might be gained in a few years by well directed trading with Venice, he spoke not without book. After endowing many churches and convents in Franconia while he was yet living, with truly lordly generosity, and providing for masses for his soul and other pious offices, he had still a sum of forty and four thousand Hungarian ducats to dispose of. And these moneys, notwithstanding Master Holzschuher's entreaties that he would devise at least half of these vast possessions to his own town and near of kin, he had bequeathed to the alms-coffers of his Holiness the Pope, to be dealt with at the pleasure of his Eminence Cardinal Bernhardi, with this sole condition: that every year, on his name-day, mass should be said by some high Prelate for his miserable soul, which sorely needed such grace. Moreover he had provided that the document, duly attested by the notary and witnesses, should be sent to Rome on the morrow by a specially appointed messenger; thus it was long since far away and out of reach when my grand-uncle had learnt that all his remaining possessions were not enough to release Herdegen. And this, as I have already said, had fallen heavy on his soul.

Verily there hath been no lack of fervent prayers for his soul on our part; and at a later time, when I came to know to how many hapless wretches his testa-

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ment had brought a blessing, little by little I forgave this strange bestowal of his wealth, and could pronounce over his grave a clear "*Requiescat in pace!*" May he rest in peace!

When we had presently duly weighed and reckoned with Master Holzschuher what we had indeed inherited from our rich kinsman, and how much we might ere long hope to collect of our own and from Cousin Maud, we had it before our eyes in plain writing that a large portion of the ransom was yet lacking. The trade of the Im Hoffs' was to be sure of great money value; but by my grand-uncle's will we might not touch it for twenty years. Likewise Master Holzschuher pointed out to us by many an example how wrong it would be, and in especial at this very time, to sell landed estate at any price, that is to say at about one-third of its real worth. And finally he told us that the Chancery guardians were not at that present time suffered to pay down one farthing of our inheritance from our father. Thus we were heavy at heart, while Doctor Holzschuher was discoursing in a low voice with Uncle Christian and Master Pernhart, and noting certain matters on paper.

Then those gentlemen rose up; and whereas I looked in the face of the worthy notary meseemed it was as withered grass well bedewed with rain; and glad assurance beamed on me from his goodly and noble features. And I read the same promise in the looks of Uncle Christian and Master Pernhart, and

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where three such men led the fray methought the victory was certain.

And now we were told what was the matter of their discourse. If they might find a fitting envoy, they might perchance move the Sultan to forego some portion of the ransom; yet would they bear in mind what the whole sum was. Much of our possessions we were indeed not suffered to sell, yet might we borrow on them or pledge them, and the good feeling of our friends and fellow citizens would, for sure, help us to the remainder. Nay, and these gentlemen methought had some privy purpose; yet, inasmuch as they told us nought of their own free will, we were careful to put no questions. As we took leave they besought us yet to delay our departing and to suffer them to be free to do what they would. And we were fain to yield, albeit the blood of the Schoppers boiled at the thought that I must tarry here idle, and others go round as it were with the beggars'-staff, in our name, and for the sake of a son of our house who had done no good to any man. Howbeit, I knew full well that pride and defiance were now out of place; and while I was walking homewards with Ann and Cousin Maud, on a sudden my cousin asked me: If Lorenz Stromer were in Herdegen's plight would I not gladly give of my estate; and when I said yes, quoth she: "Then all is well." And inasmuch as she was of the same mind she could, without a qualm, suffer the gentlemen to ask from door to door in Herdegen's name and in her own. It was our part only to show that we, as his nearest and dearest, were

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foremost in giving. And on that same day Ann brought all she possessed in gold and jewels, even to her christening coins which she had kept in her money-box, and among them likewise a costly cross of diamonds which my lord Cardinal had given her a few months ago.

That evening, again, as dusk was falling, Ann once more knocked at our door, and the reason of her coming was in truth a sad one: her grand-uncle, old Adam Heyden the organist, our friend of the tower, felt that his last hour was nigh, and bid us go to see him. Thus it came to pass that in two following days we had to stand by a death-bed. On each lay an old man departing to the other world, and meseemed their end had fallen so close together to yield warning and meditation to our young souls. Now, as I toiled up the steep turret-stair, after flying, yesterday, up the matted steps of the wealthy house of the Im Hoffs, meseemed that the two men's lives had been like to these stair-cases, and, young as I was, I nevertheless could say to myself that the humbler man's steep stair, which of late he could not mount without much panting, led up to a higher and brighter home than the wide steps of the rich merchant's palace.

Howbeit, when I had presently closed that good old man's eyes, I would not suffer myself to think thus of the twain, by reason that I could not endure to mar my remembrance of that other, to whom, after all, we owed much thanks.

The old organist had received the Holy Sacrament

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at mid-day from the hand of his old friend Nikolas Laister, the Vicar of Saint Sebald's. He would have no one to see him save ourselves and Hans Richter the churchwarden, a man after his own heart, and the Pernharts; and at first he marked not our coming, inasmuch as he was just then giving a toy to the deaf-mute boy, which he had carved with his own hand, and Dame Giovanna had much pains to carry away the child, who had cast himself on the old man with passionate love. Everything that moved the little one's soul he was forced, as it were, to express with unreasoning violence; and now, when the child was so boisterous as to disturb the peace of the others, his mother took him by the hand to lead him away into another chamber; but the dying man signed to him with a look which none may describe, and that moment the little fellow set his teeth hard and stood in silence by the door. Whereupon the old man nodded to him as though the child had done him some kindness.

Then he shut his eyes for a good while, and presently asked for some of the fine Bacharach wine which Cousin Maud had sent him; but his voice could scarce be heard. Ann reached him the glass, and at a sign from him she tasted of it; then he drank it with much comfort while Dame Giovanna held him sitting. The old, sweet smile was on his lips, and as he yet held the stem of the glass with a shaking hand, and suffered that I should help him, he cried in a clear voice: "Once more, *Prosit*, Elsie! You have waited long enough up there for your old man. And *Prosit*, likewise, to my

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dear old home, the fair city of Nuremberg." Then he took breath and added according to his wont: "*Prosit*, Adam! Thanks, Heyden!" And emptied the cup which I tilted up for him, to the very bottom. Then, when he fell back and gazed before him in silence, I found speech, and noted, albeit it struck me in truth as somewhat strange, that he bore our good town in mind then, in drinking his old pledge. Hereupon he nodded kindly and added, with an enquiring glance at the churchwarden: "It is rightly the duty of every true Christian man to pray for all mankind! Well, well; but they are so many, so infinitely many; and I, like every other man, have my own little world, inside the great world, as it were, and that is my dear old, staunch town of Nuremberg. Never have I been beyond its precincts, and it contains all on earth that is dear and precious to me. To me the citizens of Nuremberg are all mankind, and our city and so much as the eye can see from this tower all my world, small though it may be. I could ever find some good matter for thought in Nuremberg, something noble and well-compact, a fine whole. I have never sought the boundaries of the other, greater world."

Yet, that his world was in truth wider than he weened, was plain to us from the prayer he murmured wherein we could hear my brothers' names, albeit land and seas parted them from him. And after that, for a space all were silent, and he lay gazing at the bone crucifix on the wall; and at last he besought Dame Giovanna to lift him somewhat higher, and he drank

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again a little more, and said right softly as he cast a loving glance upon us each in turn: "I have looked into my own heart and gazed on Him on the Cross! That is our ensample! And I depart joyfully — and if you would know what maketh death so easy to me; it is that I have needed but little, and kept little for myself; and whereas I was wont to give away what other men save, I came to know of a certainty that all the good we do to others is the best we can do for ourselves. It is that, it is that!"

And he stretched forth his hand, and when we had all kissed it, he cried out: "My God, I now can say I thank Thee! What to-morrow may bring, Thou alone canst know! Margery, Ann, my poor children! May the bright day of meeting dawn for you! May Heaven in mercy protect the youths beyond seas! Here, close at hand is Mistress Kreutzer with her orphan children, you know them — you and Master Peter — they are in sore need of help — and the good we do to others.— But come close to me, come all of you — and the little ones likewise."

And we fell upon our knees by the bed, and he spread forth his hands and said in a clear voice: "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and be merciful unto you."

And then he sighed deeply, and his hands fell, and Dame Giovanna closed his eyes.

Yea! Death had come easy to this simple soul. Never knew I any man who gave so much out of a

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little, and never have I seen a happier or more peaceful face on a death-bed.

My grand-uncle's burial was grand and magnificent. All the town-council, and many of the nobles joined in the funeral-train. Bells tolling and priests chanting, crape, tapers, incense and the rest of it — we had more than enough of them all. Only one thing was lacking, namely, tears — not those of the hirelings who attended it, but such as fall in silence from a sorrowing eye.

In the Im Hoffs' great house all was silence till the burying was done; up in the tower, where old Adam Heyden lay asleep, the bells rang out as they did every day, for wedding and christening, for mass and mourning; yet by the low door which led to the narrow turret-stair I saw a crowd of little lads and maids with their mothers; and albeit the leaves were off the trees and the last flowers were frozen to death, many a child had found a green twig or carried a little bunch of everlasting flowers in its little hand to lay on the bier of that kind old friend. It was all the sacristan could do to keep away the multitudes who were fain to look on his face once more; and when he was borne to the grave-yard, not above two hours after my grand-uncle, there was indeed a wondrous great following. The snow was falling fast in the streets, and the fine folks who had attended him to the grave were soon warming themselves at home after the burying of old Im Hoff. But there came behind Adam Heyden's bier many right honest and respected folk, and a throng, reaching far away, of such as might feel the wind whistling cold

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through the holes in their sleeves and about their bare heads. And among these was there many a penniless woman who wiped her eyes with her kerchief or her hand, and many a widow's child, who tightened its little belt as it saw him who had so often given it a meal carried to the grave.

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CHAPTER XIV.

Our good hope of going forth with good-speed into the wide world to risk all for our lover and brother was not to be yet. We were fain to take patience; and if this seemed hard to us maidens, it was even worse for Kubbeling; the man was wont to wander free whither he would, and during these days of tarrying at the forest-lodge, first he lost his mirthful humor, and then he fell sick of a fever. For two long weeks had he to lie abed, he, who, as he himself told, had never to this day needed any healing but such as the leech who medicined his beasts could give him. We awaited the tidings of him with much fear; and at this time we likewise knew not what to think of those gentlemen who heretofore had been such steadfast and faithful friends to us, inasmuch as that Doctor Holzschuher gave no sign, and soon after my grand-uncle's burying Uncle Christian and Master Pernhart had set forth for Augsburg on some privy matters of the town council. Yet we could do nought but submit, by reason that we knew that every good citizen thinks of the weal of the Commonwealth before all else.

Even our nearest of kin had laid our concerns on the shelf, while day and night alike it weighed on our

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souls, and we made ready for a long time to come of want and humble cheer. The Virgin be my witness that at that time I was ready and willing to give up many matters which we were forced to forego; howbeit, we found out that it was easier to eat bread without butter and no flesh meat, than to give up certain other matters. As for my jewels, which Cousin Maud would not sell, but pledged them to a goldsmith, I craved them not. Only a heart with a full great ruby which I had ever worn as being my Hans' first love-token, I would indeed have been fain to keep, yet whereas Master Kaden set a high price on the stone I suffered him to break it out, notwithstanding all that Cousin Maud and Ann might say, and kept only the gold case. It was hard likewise to send forth the serving-folk and turn a deaf ear to their lamenting. Most of the men, when they heard how matters stood, would gladly have stayed to serve us for a lesser wage, and each and all went about looking as if the hail had spoilt their harvest; only old Susan held her head higher than ever, by reason that we had chosen her to share our portion during the years of famine. Likewise we were glad to promise the old horse-keeper, who had served our father before us, that we would care for him all his days; he besought me eagerly that I would keep my own Hungarian palfrey, for, to his mind, a damsel of high degree with no saddle nor steed was as a bird that cannot rise on its wings. Howbeit, we found those who were glad to buy the horse, and never shall I forget the hour when for the last time I patted the smooth

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neck of my *Bayard*, the gift of my lost lover, and felt his shrewd little head leaning against my own. Uncle Tucher bought him for his daughter Bertha, and it was a comfort to me to think that she was a soft, kind-hearted maid, whom I truly loved. All the silver gear likewise, which we had inherited, was pledged for money, and where it lay I knew not; yet of a truth the gifts of God taste better out of a silver spoon than out of a tin one. Cousin Maud, who would have no half measures, carried many matters of small worth to the pawn-broker; yet all this grieved us but lightly, although the sky hung dark over the town, by reason that other events at that time befell which gave us better cheer.

The *Magister*, as soon as he had tidings of our purpose, came with right good will to offer us his all, and declared his intent to share our simple way of life; and this was no more than we had looked for, albeit we steadfastly purposed only to take from him so much as he might easily make shift to spare. But it was indeed a joyful surprise when, one right dreary day, Heinz Trardorf, Herdegen's best-beloved companion in his youth, who had long kept far from the house, came to speak with us of Herdegen's concerns. He had now followed his father, who was dead, as master in his trade, and was already so well thought of that the Council had trusted his skilled hands to build a new great organ for the Church of Saint Laurence. I knew full well, to be sure, that when Herdegen had come back from Paris in all his bravery, he had cared but lit-

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tle for Trardorf's fellowship; but I had marked, many a time in church, that his eyes were wont to rest full lovingly on me.

And now, when I gave him my hand and asked him what might be his will, at first he could scarce speak, albeit he was a man of substance to whom all folks would lift their hat. At last he made bold to tell me that he had heard tidings of the sum demanded to ransom Herdegen, and that he, inasmuch as that he dwelt in his own house and that his profits maintained him in more than abundance, could have no greater joy than to pay the moneys he had by inheritance to ransom my brother.

And as the good fellow spoke the tears stood in his eyes, and mine likewise were about to flow; and albeit Cousin Maud here broke in and, to hide how deeply her heart was touched, said, well-nigh harshly, that without doubt the day was not far off when he would have a wife and family, and might rue the deed by which he had parted with his estate, never perchance to see it more, I freely and gladly gave him my hand, and said to him that for my part his offering would be dearest to me of any, and that for sure Herdegen would be of the same mind. And a beam as of sunshine overspread his countenance, and while he shook my hand in silence I could see that he hardly refrained himself from betraying more. After this, I came to know from his good mother that this offer of moneys had cost him a great pang, but only for this cause: that he had loved me from his youth up, and his noble soul

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forbid him to pay court to me when he had in truth done me so great a service.

Still, and in despite of these gleams of light, I must ever remember those three weeks as a full gloomy and sorrowful time.

Kubbeling's eldest son and his churlish helpmate had fared forth to Venice instead of himself. They might not sail for the land of Egypt, and this chafed Uhlwurm sorely, by reason that he was sure in himself that he, far better than his master or than any man on earth, could do good service there to Ann, on whom his soul was set more than on any other of us.

Towards the end of the third week we rode forth to spend a few days again at the lodge, and there we found Young Kubbeling well nigh healed of his fever, and Eppelein's tongue ready to wag and to tell us of his many adventures without overmuch asking. Howbeit, save what concerned his own mishaps, he had little to say that we knew not already.

The Saracen pirate who had boarded the galleon from Genoa which was carrying him and his lord to Cyprus, had parted him from Herdegen and Sir Franz, and sold him for a slave in Egypt. There had he gone through many fortunes, till at last, in Alexandria, he had one day met Akusch. At that time my faithful squire's father was yet in good estate, and he forthwith bought Eppelein, who was then a chattel of the overseer of the market, to the end that the fellow might help his son in the search for Herdegen. This search they had diligently pursued, and had discovered

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my brother and Sir Franz together in the armory of the Sultan's Palace, in the fort over against Cairo, whither they had come after they had both worked at the oars in great misery for two years, on board a Saracen galley.

But then Herdegen had made proof, in some jousting among the young Mamelukes, of how well skilled he was with the sword, and thereby he had won such favor that they were fain to deliver sundry letters which he wrote to us, into the care of the Venice consul. Whereas he had no answer he had set it down to our lack of diligence at home, till at last he was put on the right track by Akusch, and it was plainly shown that those letters had never reached us, and that by Ursula's malice. To follow up these matters Akusch had afterwards betaken himself again to Alexandria; notwithstanding by this time his father had fallen on evil days. And behold, on the very evening after their return, as they were passing along by the side of the Venice Fondaco, whither they had gone to see the leech who attended the Consul — having heard that he was a German by birth — they were aware of a loud outcry hard by, and presently beheld a wounded man, whom they forthwith knew for Kunz.

At first they believed that their eyes deceived them; and that it should have been these two, of all men, who found their master's brother lying in his blood, I must ever deem a miracle. To be sure, any man from the West who was fain to seek another in the land of Egypt, must first make enquiry here at the Fondaco.

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A few hours later Kunz was in bed and well tended in the house of Akusch's mother, and it was on their return to Cairo, to speak with my eldest brother of these matters, that Eppelein was witness to Ursula's vile betrayal and the vast demand of the Sultan. Then my brother, by the help of some who showed him favor, had that letter conveyed to Akusch of which Eppelein had been robbed hard by Pillenreuth. More than this the good fellow had not to tell.

As I, on my ride home through the wood, turned over in my mind who might be the wise and trusty friend to whom we could confide our case and our fears, if Kubbeling should leave us in the lurch, verily I found no reply. If indeed Cousin Götz — that wise and steadfast wayfaring man, rich with a thousand experiences of outlandish life — if he were willing to make common cause with his Little Red-riding-hood, and the companion of his youth! But a terrible oath kept him far away, and where in the wide world might he be found?

Ann likewise had much to cause her heaviness, and I thanked the Saints that I was alone with Eppelein when he told me that his dear lord was sorely changed, albeit having seen him only from afar, he could scarce tell me wherein that change lay.

Thus we rode homewards in silence, through the evening dusk, and as we came in sight of the lights of the town all my doubting and wandering fears vanished on a sudden in wonderment as to who should be the first person we might meet within the gate, inasmuch

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as Cousin Maud had ever set us the unwise example of considering such a meeting as a sign, or token, or *Augury*.

Now, as soon as we had left the gate behind us, lo, a lantern was lifted, and we saw, by the light twinkling dimly through the horn, instead of old Hans Heimvogel's red, sottish face, a sweet and lovely maiden's; by reason that he had fallen into horrors, imagining that mice were rushing over him, so that his fair granddaughter Maria was doing duty for him. And I greeted her right graciously, inasmuch as Cousin Maud held it to be a good sign when a smiling maid should be the first to meet her as she came into the city gates.

As for Ann, she scarce marked that it was Maria; and when, after we were come home, I spoke of this token of good promise, she asked me how, in these evil days, I could find heart to think of such matters; and she sighed and cried: "Oh, Margery, indeed I am heavy at heart! For three long years have I taken patience and with a right good will. But the end, meseems, is further than ever, and he who should have helped us is disabled or ever he has stirred a finger, and even my lord Cardinal's home-coming is put off, albeit all men know that Herdegen is as a man in a den of lions — and I, my spirit sinks within me. And even my wise grandmother can give me no better counsel than to 'wait patiently' and yet again 'Wait' . . ."

Whereupon Susan, who had taken off from us our wet hoods, broke in with: "Aye, Mistress Ann, and

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that has ever from the days of Adam and Eve, been the best of all counsel. For life all through is but waiting for the end; and even when we have taken the last Sacrament and our eyes are dim in death then most of all must we take Patience, waiting for that we shall find beyond the grave. Here below! By my soul, I myself grew grey waiting in vain for one who long years ago gave me this ring. Others had better luck; yet if the priest had wed us, would that have made an end of Patience? I trow not! It might have been for weal or it might have been for woe. A wife may go to mass every day in the month. But is that an end of Patience? Will the storks bring her a babe or no? Will it be a boy or a maid? And if the little one should come, after the wife has told her beads till her fingers are sore, what will the waiting babe turn out? Such an one as Junker Herdegen grows up to be the delight of every eye and heart, and if that make less need of Patience meseems we know full well! And Mistress Waldstromer, out in the forest, a lady, she, of stern stuff, she could tell a tale; and I say, Mistress Ann, if old Dame Pernhart's answer sinks into your heart, God's blessing rest on it! — I am waiting, as you are waiting. We each and all are waiting for one; if by the merciful help of the Saints he ever comes home, yet never dream, Mistress Ann, that Patience will be out of court."

And with such comfort as this the old woman hung our garments to dry while we bowed our heads and went up-stairs.

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Up in the guest-chamber we heard loud voices, and as we went in a strange sight met our eyes. Uncle Christain and Doctor Holzschuher were sitting face to face with Cousin Maud, and she was laughing so heartily that she could not control herself, but flung up her arms and then dropped them on her knees, for all the world as she had taught us children to play at a game of "Fly away, little birds."

When she marked my presence she forgot to greet me, and cried to me well nigh breathless.

"A drink of wine, Margery, and a morsel of bread. I am ready to split — I shall die of laughing!"

Then, when I heard my good Godfather Christian's hearty laughing, and saw that Master Holzschuher had but just ceased, I was fain to laugh likewise, and even Ann, albeit she had but now been so sad, joined in. This lasted a long while till we learned the cause of such unwonted mirth; and this was of such a kind as to afford great comfort and new assurance, and we were bound to crave our good friends' pardon for having deemed them lacking in diligence. Master Holzschuher had indeed made the best use of the time to move every well-to-do man in Nuremberg who had known our departed father, and the Abbots of the rich convents, and many more, to give of their substance as they were able, to redeem Herdegen from the power of the heathen; and the other twain had worked wonders likewise, in Augsburg.

But that which had moved Cousin Maud to mirth was that my Uncle Christian had related how that he

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and Master Pernhart, finding old Tetzel, Ursula's father, at Augsburg, had agreed together to make him pay a share towards Herdegen's ransom; and my godfather's face beamed again now, with contentment in every feature, as he told us by what means he had won the churlish old man over to the good cause.

Whereas the three good gentlemen had considered that all of Jost Tetzel's great possessions must presently fall to his daughter, and that it would be a deed pleasing to God to bring some chastisement on that traitorous quean, they had laid a plot against her father; and it was for that alone that Uncle Christian, who could ill endure the ride in the winter-season, had set forth, with Master Pernhart, for Augsburg. And there he had achieved a rare masterpiece of skill, painting Dame Ursula's reprobate malice in such strong colors to her father that Master Pernhart was in fear lest he should bring upon himself another fit. And he had furthermore sworn to lay the whole matter before the Emperor, with whom, as all men knew, he enjoyed much privilege, inasmuch as he had been as it were his host when his Majesty held his court at Nuremberg. Ursula, to be sure, was no subject now of his gracious Majesty's; yet would he, Christian Pfinzing, know no rest till the Emperor had compelled her father, Jost Tetzel, to cut off from her who had married an Italian, the possessions she counted on from a German city.

Thereupon Pernhart had spoken in calm but weighty words, threatening that his brother, the Cardinal, would visit the heaviest wrath of the Pope on the

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old man and his daughter, unless he were ready and willing to make amends and atonement for his child's accursed sin, whereby a Christian man had fallen into the hands of the godless heathen. And when at last they had conquered the churlish old man's hardness of heart and stiff-necked malice, they drove him to a strange bargain. Old Tetzel was steadfast in his intention to give up as little as he might of his daughter's inheritance, while his tormentors raised their demands, and claimed a hundred gulden and a hundred gulden more, up to many hundreds, which Tetzel was forced to yield; till at last he gave his bond, signed and sealed, to renounce all his daughter's estate, and to add thereto two thousand gulden of his own moneys, and to hold the sum in readiness to ransom Herdegen.

Thus, at one stroke, all our fears touching the moneys were at an end; and when the notary showed us the parchment roll on which each one had set down the sum he would give, we were struck dumb; and when we reckoned it all together, the sum was far greater than that which had cost us so many sleepless nights.

By this time we scarce could read for tears, and our souls were so moved to thankfulness as we marked the large sums set forth against the names of the noble families and of the convent treasurers, that we had never felt so great a love for our good city and the dear, staunch friends who dwelt therein. Nay, and many simple folk had promised to pay somewhat of their modest store; and although my soul over-

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flowed with thankful joy over the great sums to be given by our kith and kin, I rejoiced no less over the five pounds of farthings promised by a cordwainer, whom we had holpen some years ago when he had been sick and in debt.

And then was there hearty embracing and kissing, and the men, as was befitting after a deed so well done, craved to drink. Cousin Maud hastened with all zeal to do honor to friends and guests so dear; but as she reached the door she stood still as in doubt, and signed to me so that I perceived that somewhat had gone wrong. And so indeed it had, inasmuch as our silver vessels, down to the very least cup, had gone to the silversmith in pledge, and Uncle Tucher, the Councillor, who had bought my palfrey, had also been fain to have all our old wine, whereof many goodly rows of casks, and jars sealed with pitch, lay in our cellars. A few hams still hung in the chimney by good luck; and there were chickens and eggs in plenty; but of all else little enough, even of butter. When Cousin Maud set forth all this with a right lamentable face I could not refrain my mirth, and I promised her that if she could send up a few dainty dishes from the kitchen, I would make shift to please our beloved guests. That as for the wine, I would take that upon myself, and no Emperor need be ashamed of our Venice glasses. And herewith I sent her down stairs; but I then frankly confessed to our friends how matters stood; and when they had heard me, now laughing heartily, and now in amazement and shaking their heads, I en-

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quired of Doctor Holzschuher, as a man of law, how I might deal with the wine, inasmuch as it had already found a purchaser? Hereupon arose much jocose argument and discussion, and at last the learned notary and doctor of laws declared that he held it to be his duty, as adviser to the Council and administrator of the Schopper estates, to taste and prove with all due caution whether the price promised by Tucher, and not yet paid down, were not all too little for the liquor, inasmuch as his clients, being but women-folk, had no skill in the good gifts of Bacchus, and could not know their value. To abstain from such testing he held would be a breach of duty, and whereas he did not trust his own skill alone, he must call upon Master Christian Pfinzing as a man of ripe experience, and Master Councillor Pernhart, who, as brother to a great prelate, had doubtless drunk much good liquor, in due form to proceed with him to the Schoppers' cellar, and there to mark those vessels or jars out of which the wine should be drawn for the testing. Moreover, to satisfy all the requirements of the case, a serving-man should be sent to call upon Master Tucher, as the purchaser, to be present in his own person at the ceremony. Inasmuch as it yet lacked two hours of midnight, he would, without doubt, be found in the gentlemen's tavern; and it might be enjoined on the messenger to add, that if Master Tucher were fain to bring with him one skilled in such matters to bear him witness on his part, such an one would be made right welcome at the Schopperhof.

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Thus within a quarter of an hour the three worthy gentlemen, and Ann and I, were seated with the wine-jars before us, they having chosen for themselves of the best our cellar could afford; and when the meats which Cousin Maud sent up were set on the table, albeit there were but earthen plates and crocks, and no silver glittered on the snow-white cloth, yet God's good gifts lacked not their savor.

And presently Uncle Tucher came in, and with him, as his skilled witness, old Master Loffelholz; and when they likewise had sat down with us, and when we had bidden the *Magister* to join us, there was such hearty and joyful emptying of glasses and friendly discourse that Master Tucher declared that the happy spirit of our father, the singer, still dwelt within our walls. Howbeit, Ann had to do her duty as watcher over my uncle more often that evening than for a long time past.

In the course of that right joyful supper many weighty matters were discussed, and the gentlemen, meseemed, were greatly more troubled than Cousin Maud or I that we should so hastily have parted with sundry matters which should not be lacking in a house of good family, but which, as we had learned by experience, were in no wise needful in life. And many a jesting word was spoken concerning our poor platters and dishes, and tin spoons, and empty stables. The bargain over the wine was declared to be null and void, and my cousin took heart to assure the gentlemen, in right seemly speech, that now again she was

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happy, when she knew that what she had set before such worshipful and welcome guests was indeed our own, and not another's.

By the time of their departing it was nearer to cock-crow than to midnight; and when, on the morrow, I went into the chamber in the morning, to look forth into the street, the sun was shining brightly in a blue sky. I minded me with silent thanksgiving of all the good cheer yestereve had brought us, and of the wisdom and faithfulness of our good friends. Many a wise and a witty word uttered over their wine came back to me then; and I was wondering to myself what new plot had been brewing between my godfather and Uncle Tucher, whereas I had marked them laying their heads together, when behold, the stable-lad from the Tuchers' coming down the street, leading my own dear bay-horse; and as I saw him closer I beheld that his mane and flowing tail were plaited up with fine red ribbons. He stood still in front of our door and, when I flew down to greet the faithful beast, the lad gave me a letter wherein nought was written save these Latin words in large letters: "AMICITIA FIDEI" which is to say: "Friendship to Fidelity."

Thus the pinch and sacrifice were on a sudden ended; and albeit a snow-storm ere long came down on us, yet the sunshine in my bosom was still as bright as though Spring had dawned there in the December season, and all care and fear were banished.

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CHAPTER XV.

It was noon. Master Peter could not come to table for a bad headache, and Cousin Maud scarce opened her lips. The sudden turn of matters had upset her balance, and so dazed her brain that she would answer at cross-purposes, and had ordered so many pats of butter from the farm wench as though she had cakes to bake for a whole convent full of sisters. Likewise a strange unrest kept her moving to and fro, and this was beginning to come upon me likewise, by reason that Ann came not, albeit in the morning she had promised to be here again at noon.

I was about to make ready to seek her, when I was stopped, first by a message from the forest bidding me, albeit I had scarce left the lodge, to return thither no later than on the morrow; and next by an unlooked-for guest, who had for long indeed been lost to sight.

This was Lorenz Abenberger, the apothecary's son, erewhile a companion of Herdegen in his youth, and he who, after he had beguiled the other *pueri* to dig for treasure, had been turned out of the school. Since those days, when likewise he had cast nativities for us maidens, and many a time amused us with his magic arts, we had no knowledge of him but that, after his parents' death, he had ceased to ply the apothecary's

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trade, and had given himself up to the study of Alchemy. If folks spoke truth he had already discovered the philosopher's stone, or was nigh to doing so: but notwithstanding that many learned men, and among them the *Magister* had assured me, that such a thing was by no means beyond the skill of man, Lorenz Abenberger for certain had not attained his end, inasmuch as that, when he appeared in my presence, his aspect was rather that of a beggar than of a potent wise-head at whose behest lead and copper are transmuted into gold.

He had heard of the great sum needed for Herdegen's ransom, and he now came to assure me of the warm friendship he had ever cherished for his old school-mate, and that he had it in his power to create the means of releasing him from bondage. Then, marking that I gazed pitifully on his thread-bare, meagre, and by no means clean raiment, whence there came a sour, drug-like smell, he broke into a foul laugh and said that, to be sure, it would seem strange that so beggarly a figure should make bold to promise so great a treasure; howbeit, he stood to his word. So sure as night follows day, he could reach the goal for which he had consumed all his father's and mother's estate, nay all he had in the world, if he might but once have three pounds of pure gold to do whatsoever he would withal. If I would yield to his entreaties and be moved to grant what he needed, he was ready to pledge his body and soul to death and damnation, and sign the bond with his heart's blood, if by the end of

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the thirteenth day he had not found the red Lion, and through its aid *Aurum potabile* and the *panacea* against every evil of body or soul. This would likewise give him the power of turning every mineral, even the most worthless, into pure gold, as easily as I might turn my spinning-wheel or say a *Paternoster*.

All this he poured forth with rolling eyes and panting breath, and that he spoke every word in sacred earnest none could doubt; and indeed the fervent, eager longing which appealed to my compassion and charity from every fibre of his being, might have moved me to bestow on him that which he craved, if I had possessed such wealth; but, as it was, I was forced to say him nay; and whereas at this minute Susan came in with the tidings that a man had come from the Pernharts', bidding me go forthwith to Ann, I threw over me my cloak and gave him to understand how matters stood with me, bidding him farewell with all gentleness yet of set purpose.

The blood mounted into his pale cheeks; he came close up to me, and set his teeth, and said wrathfully that I must and I should save him, and with him my own brother, if I did but clearly understand the sense and purpose of his entreaty. And he began with a flood of speech to tell me how near he was to his end, with a number of outlandish, magical words such as "the great *Magisterium*," "the Red Lion," "the Red Tincture," and the like, till meseemed my brain reeled with the sinful gibberish; notwithstanding, to this day I believe that in all truth he was nigh attaining his pur-

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pose; and he might have done so at last were it not that, a short space after this, he was choked by the vapor from an *alembic* which burst.

But whence might I at that day procure the means to succor him?

Again and again I strove to check his fiery zeal, but in vain, till I told him plainly that I had not at my command three pounds of brass farthings, much less three pounds of gold, and that he must apply elsewhere and no longer keep me tarrying.

And I gave him my hand to bid him farewell; howbeit he seized it with both of his, and wrung and shook my arm till it ached; and being beside himself with rage, he admonished me with threatening words and gestures not to ruin his life's work, and him, and those dear to me, by my base avarice. When I had got over my first fear I snatched myself free from the miserable little man, and turned my back upon him; but he leaped in front of me, spread forth his arms to bar the doorway, and shrieked, foaming with fury:

"Away, away, down to the depths! Away with us all! Woe unto thee, mean, blind fool that thou art! Woe unto us all! Take away that hand! Verily even if my mouth were gagged, yet shouldst thou hear what is coming upon thee and all thy race! I could have hindered it, and I would have hindered it; but now it shall be fulfilled. Oh, it was not for nothing that we were young together! I read thy horoscope and that arrogant brawler thy brother's long ago, and

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when I interpret it to thee, if the blood does not curdle in thy veins. . . ."

Hereupon the blood of the Schoppers surged up; I laid hands on the mad wight, whose strength was scarce greater than mine, but he hit and stamped about like one bereft, crying: "Your planets stand over the houses of Death, Captivity, and Despair. The fulfilment thereof began on Saint Lazarus' day, and on this day it falls first on thee; and thus the doom shall run its course till it hath an end on Saint John's eve, by reason that ye will then have nought left to lose!"

Here Abenberger's raving came to a sudden end. His outcry had brought up Cousin Maud, and when she opened the door behind him and saw a man standing in my way, she clutched him from behind, throwing her arms about him, and dragged him out of the chamber. Meanwhile she shrieked aloud "Fire!" and "Murder!" and again "Fire!" and all the men and wenches ran up in hot haste and had the gold-maker down the stairs fast enough.

Howbeit, I felt truly grieved for him; yet, as I gazed down on him from the window, I saw that he had taken his stand without in the street, and was shaking his fist up at me till a constable saw it and sent him homewards.

Then I must first comfort Cousin Maud for this untoward scene, and suffer her to rub my wrists with wine and spirit of balm, forasmuch as they tingled like fire and were scratched by the hapless wight's nails. She was beside herself with rage, and the evil prediction of

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the master of the black arts and of star-gazing filled her with unbounded terrors. Thus it was my part, though the younger, to give her courage, notwithstanding that the awful curse haunted me likewise, and rang in my ears even when at last I made my way through the dark streets, followed by the serving-man, to do Ann's bidding. My heart was heavier than it had been for many a day; for my fears were mingled with pity for that hapless soul, so skilled in much learning. I had learned to feel other woes and joys besides my own, and I could full well picture in my mind the despair which, at this hour, must wring the soul of that poor fellow. I was glad to think that the serving-man might believe that I put my kerchief to my eyes only to wipe away the whirling snow. At the same time, methought that for certain some new and terrible sorrow hung over us; nay, never so clearly as then, after Abenberger's violent attack, had I perceived how much alone and without protection I stood in the world. And wherefor had Ann not come to me? For what reason or matter had she sent for me at so late an hour?

Then, when I looked up at the Pernharts' house, I saw that the windows of the first floor which had been made ready as guest chambers some days ago, for my lord Cardinal, were lighted up, so he must have come home and now be lodging there again.

But Ann knew full well how truly I honored her reverend and illustrious uncle, and for sure if he had brought her good tidings she would forthwith have sent me word, or have come to me herself.

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What then was now the matter? In what form had the misfortune come upon us which Abenberger had read in the stars?

I lifted the knocker with a faint heart, and could scarce breathe when I had to knock three times or ever the door was opened.

How swiftly my Ann was wont to fly to me when she heard my tap! Was she then afraid to meet me with the message of woe which my lord Cardinal had perchance received from Cairo through his chaplains there? We had the ransom ready to be sure; yet Ursula would be almost forced, after her treacherous deed, to pursue Herdegen to his death; what could she look for if he ever came home again? Come what might then, and were it the worst, I must set out, and that forthwith, even if I found no fellowship but Cousin Maud and Eppelein. And to this purpose I had come, when at last the door was opened.

Below stairs nought was stirring. I hastily flung my wet mantle to Mario, the deaf-mute, who had let me in, and ran up stairs. Hardly had I reached the second floor when Ann met me, well and of good cheer; and when I began, in the outer chamber, to beseech her to be no less steadfast than I was in departing for the East, she nodded consent, and pointed the way into the inner chamber, where we might be more at our ease. I was amazed to see her in such good heart, and all the more so when she told me that my lord Cardinal had come home that morning.

There was above stairs, she hastily told me, a noble

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Italian Knight, who had desired to see our pictures; so we went into the guest chamber, which was all lighted up as when company was bidden. Nay, it was of such festal aspect as well nigh dazzled me, and I discerned at once that my portrait, which only a few days ago had been hanged on the wall by the side of Ann's for my lord Cardinal, was now placed on two chairs and leaning against the high backs.

All this and more I perceived in a few hasty glances, and when I enquired where might this stranger from Italy be, I was told that he had gone with Master Pernhart into the chamber which had been fitted for his Eminence with the magnificent stuffs from Rome and Florence which he had brought as a gift for his old mother. The finest of these were certain hangings of fine tissue and of many colors, which hung over the wide opening between the great guest chamber and that next to it. And the Italian must likewise have seen these, inasmuch as that they hung down, whereas they were wont to be drawn to the sides. Behind them, all was dark; thus the Master and his wife, with their strange guest, must have withdrawn into the chamber at the back of the house, where the Cardinal had loved to work, and wherein there were sundry works of art to be seen, and choice Greek manuscripts which he had brought with him to show to the learned doctors in his native town, as being rare and precious.

None was here save the old grandam, and her countenance beamed with joy as she held out her hands to me from her arm-chair, in glad and hearty

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greeting. She was dressed in her bravest array, and there was in her aspeet likewise somewhat solemn and festal.

Albeit I was truly minded at all times to rejoice with those who were rejoicing, all this bravery, at this time, was sorely against the grain of my troubled heart and its forebodings of ill. I could not feel at ease, and meseemed that all this magnificence and good cheer mocked my hapless and oppressed spirit.

In truth, I could scarce bring myself to return the old dame's greeting with due gladness; and her keen eyes at once discerned how matters were with me. She held me by the hand, and asked me in a hearty voice whence came the clouds that darkened my brow. When her bright, high-spirited Margery, whom she had never known to be in a gloomy mood, looked like this, for sure some great evil had befallen.

Whereupon what came over me I know not. Whether it were that the blackness and the terror in my bosom were too great a contrast with the gladness and splendor about me, or what it was that so tightly gripped my heart, I cannot tell to this day; but I know full well that all which had oppressed me since Abenberger denounced me came rushing down on my soul as it were, and that I burst into tears and cried out: "Yes, grandmother dear, I have gone through a dreadful, terrible hour! I have had to withstand the attack of a madman, and hear a horrible curse from his lips. But it is not that alone, no, verily and indeed! I can, for that matter, make any man to know his place, were

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he twice the man that little Abenberger is; and as to curses, I learnt from a child to mind my dear father's saying: "Curse me if you will! What matters it if I may earn God's blessing!"

"And you have earned it, honestly earned it," quoth she, drawing me down to kiss my forehead.

Hereupon I ceased weeping and bid my heart take fresh courage, and went on, still much moved: "It is nought but a woman's shameless craft that troubles me so sorely. Ursula's hate hangs over my brothers like a black storm-cloud; and on my way hither meseemed I saw full plainly that the ransom is not the end of the matter. Nay, if we had twice so much, yet Herdegen will never come home alive if we fail to cross Ursula's scheming; has she not cause to fear the worst, if ever he comes home in safety? But where is the envoy who would dare so much? Kunz lies wounded in a strange land; Young Kubbeling would doubtless be ready to cross the seas, notwithstanding his fever, but good-will would not serve him, so little is he skilled in such matters. Our other friends are over old, or forced to stay in Nuremberg. Thus do matters stand. What then is left to us — to Ann and me, Grandmother? I ask you — what, save to act on our first and only wise intent? And that which it is our part to do, which we may not put off one day longer than we need, is to take ship, under the grace of the Blessed Virgin, and ourselves to carry fresh courage to those who are nearest and dearest to us. Of a truth I am but an orphaned maid; my lover and my guardian are both dead; and

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yet do I not fear to depart for a land beyond seas; true and faithful love is the guiding-star which shall lead us, and we have seen in Ann how true is the Apostle's saying that love conquereth all things. Any creature who stands straight on a pair of strong legs, and who is sound in soul and body, and who looks up to Heaven and trusts in God's grace with joyful assurance, even if it be but a weak maiden, may rescue a fellow-creature in need; and I, thank God, am sound and whole. Nay, and I will even pledge my word that I will tear asunder the subtlest web which Ursula may spin, in especial if I have Ann's keen wit to aid me. So I will go forth, and away, through frost and snow, to find my brethren; and if his pains keep Kubbeling at home in spite of his cat-skins, and if Master Ulsenius should forbid Eppelein to ride so far, yet will we find some other to be our faithful squire."

And with this I drew a deep breath; and when I turned to seek Ann, with a lighter heart, to the end that she should signify her consent, on a sudden meseemed as though the floor of the chamber rose up beneath my feet, and I was nigh falling, by reason that the fine hangings which hid the Cardinal's chamber from my eyes were drawn asunder, and a tall man, tanned brown by the sun, came forth, and said in a deep voice: "Wilt thou trust these hands, Margery? They are ready and willing to serve thee faithfully."

Hereupon a cry of joy broke from me: "Götz," and again "Götz!"

And albeit meseemed as though the walls, and

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tables, and chairs were whirling round me, and as though the ceiling, nay and the blue sky above it had yawned above me, yet I fell not, but hastened to meet this new-comer, and grasped his kind, strong hand.

Yet was not this all; or ever I was rightly aware how it befell, he had clasped me in his arms, and I was leaning on his breast, and his warm bearded lips were for the first time set on mine.

Master Pernhart and his wife had come out of the further chamber with my cousin, and Ann, and the grandam, and the elder children gazed at us; yet neither he nor I paid heed to them and, as each looked into the other's eyes, and I saw that his face was the same as of old, albeit of a darker brown, and more well-favored and manly; then my heart sang out in joyful triumph, and I made no resistance when he held me closer to him and whispered in my ear: "But Margery, how may a cousin, who is not an old man, go forth as squire to a fair young maid, and so further on through a lifetime, and not rouse other folks to great and righteous wrath?"

At this the blood mounted to my face; and albeit I by no means doubted of my reply, he spared my bashfulness and went on with deep feeling: "But if he did so as your wedded husband, what aunt or gossip then might dare to blame him and his honored wife, Dame Margery Waldstromer?"

Whereat I smiled right gladly up at my new lover, and answered him in a whisper: "Not one, Götz, not one."

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Thus I plighted my troth to him that very evening; and as for the costly jewels which he had bought on the Rialto at Venice to bring to his dear Red-riding-hood, and now gave me as his first love-tokens, what were they to me as compared with the joyful news wherewith he could rejoice our hearts? So presently we sat with the Pernharts after that Cousin Maud and Uncle Christian Pfinzing, my dear godfather, had been bidden to join us. Götz sat with his arm round me, and my hand rested in his.

For how long a space had lands and seas lain betwixt us, how swift and sudden had his wooing been and my consent! And yet, meseemed as though I had but now fulfilled the purpose of Providence for me from the beginning; and there was singing and blossoming in my breast and heart, as though they were an enchanted garden wherein fountains were leaping, and roses and tulips and golden apples and grapes were blooming and ripening among pine-trees and ivy-wreaths.

Nevertheless I lost no word of his speech, and could have listened to him till morning should dawn again.

And while we thus sat, or paced the room arm-in-arm, I heard many matters, and yet not enough of Götz's adventurous fate, and of the happy turn my brothers' concerns had taken with his good help. And what we now learned from his clear and plain report, answering our much questioning, was that, after separating from his home, he had taken service as a soldier of the Venice Republic, and had done great deeds un-

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der the name of *Silvestri*, which is to say "of the Woods." Of all the fine things he had done before Salonica and elsewhere, fighting against Sultan Mourad and the Osmanli, yea, and in many fights against other infidels, thereby winning the favor of his general, the great Pietro Loredano — of all this he would tell us at great length another day. Not long since he had been placed as chief, at the head of the armed force on board the fleet sent forth by the Republic to Alexandria to treat with the Sultan as concerning the King of Cyprus, who was held a prisoner. With him likewise, on the greatest of the galleys, were there sundry great gentlemen of the most famous families of Venice, and chief of them all, Marino Cavallo, *Procurator* of Saint Mark; inasmuch as that the Council desired to ransom the King of Cyprus with Venice gold, and to that end had sent Angelo Michieli with the embassy, he being the *Senior* of one of the most powerful and wealthy merchants' houses in the East.

With all of these Götz, as a hero in war, was on right friendly terms, and when they landed at Alexandria, Anselmo Giustiniani, the Consul, had given them all fine quarters in the Fondaco.

Here, then, my new lover had met Ursula; howbeit, he made not himself known to her, by reason that already he had heard an evil report of her husband's dealings as Consul, and of her deeds and demeanors. Yet was there one man dwelling in the Fondaco to whom he confessed his true name, and that was Hartmann Knorr, a son of Nuremberg and of good

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family, who, after gaining his doctor's degree at Padua, had taken the post of leech to the Consul, provided and paid by the Republic. In this, his fellow countryman's chamber, the two, who had been schoolmates, had much privy discourse, and inasmuch as that Master Knorr knew of old that Götz was near of kin to the Schoppers, he forthwith made known to him that he had been bidden to the house of Akusch's parents to tend and heal Kunz, and had learnt from him many strange tidings; accusing Ursula of the guilt of having concealed and kept back the letters written by Herdegen and Sir Franz to their kindred at home, of having set her husband's hired knaves on himself, to murder him, and lastly, of having maliciously increased the sum for his brother's ransom. Hereupon the worthy leech was minded to sail to Venice in the next homeward-bound galleon, to do what he might for his countrymen in sore straits; howbeit, Götz might now perchance work out their release from grief and slavery in some other wise. And whereas Master Knorr could give him tidings of other criminal deeds committed by Giustiniani, my new lover had forthwith written a petition of accusation to the Council at Venice, and forthwith Marino Cavallo, in his rights as procurator of Saint Mark, had commanded the Consul and his wife to depart for Venice and present themselves before the *Collegium* of the *Pregadi*, which hath the direction of the Consuls beyond seas.

Likewise Götz had taken in hand the cause of Herdegen and Sir Franz; and forasmuch as he was held in

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great respect, Master Angelo Michieli was not hardly won to do what he might for them, taking Götz and Kunz for surety. The Venice embassy went forth to Cairo, and whereas Master Michieli, who was skilled in such matters, beat down the ransom demanded for King Janus to the sum of two hundred thousand ducats, and paid it down for the royal captive, he likewise moved the Sultans to be content with fifteen thousand ducats each for Herdegen and Sir Franz, and my brother and his fellow in misfortune were set free.

All through this tale my heart beat higher; I secretly hoped that peradventure my brothers had come home with Götz, and were hiding themselves away, only for some reason privy to themselves. Howbeit, I presently heard that they had set forth with their faces to Jerusalem; to the end that they might, at their homecoming, tell the Emperor with the greater assurance, that they had taken upon themselves the penance of going at last to the Holy Places whither they had been bidden to go.

When Götz had ended these great and comforting tidings, and I enquired of him what then had at last brought him homewards, he freely confessed that my brothers' discourse had recalled to him so plainly his fathers' house, his parents, and all that was dear and that he had left, that he could no longer endure to stay away beyond seas. Then he looked me in the eyes and whispered: "The images of my sick mother and my grey-headed father drew me most strongly;

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yet was a third; a dear, sweet, childish face; the very same as now looks into mine so gladly and lovingly. Yes, it is the very face I had hoped to find it; and when, erewhile, I saw your likeness in the red hood, and heard your speech as you poured forth your inmost soul to grandmother Pernhart, I knew my own mind."

How dear the newcomer was, in truth, to all in the Pernhart household I might mark that evening. The old grandam's eyes rested on him as though he were a dear son, and Master Pernhart would come close to him now and again, and stroke his arm. Twice only did he hastily turn away and privily wipe his eyes. Nevertheless he saw our love-making with no jealousy; nay, when Götz could scarce tear himself away from my picture, Master Pernhart whispered to him that if ever a maid should stand in his Gertrude's place it should be Margery, and the grandam had cried *Amen.*

It was already midnight when horses' hoofs were heard in the street, and when they stopped Götz rose, and then presently all the others vanished from the chamber. Yet were we not long suffered to enjoy each other's fellowship, inasmuch as he himself had ordered his horse, to the end that he might ride forth spite of the lateness of the hour to the forest. His serving-man, himself the son of a forester, had been there already to desire Grubner, the headman, to bid my uncle to his dwelling early on the morrow, and the good son purposed there to gladden himself by meet-

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ing his father, after that he had greeted the house unseen in the darkness.

But how hard it was to part after so brief a meeting from this newly-found and best-beloved lover, and to see the weary traveller fare forth once more into the dark night. And how few words in secret had we as yet spoken, how little had we discussed what might befall on the morrow, and how he should demean himself to his mother!

To my humble entreaty that he would set aside the unnatural and sinful oath which forbade him to enter his parents' house he had turned a deaf ear. Yet how lovingly had he given me to understand his stern refusal, which I justly deserved, inasmuch as I knew full well the meaning of an oath; and yet I besought him with all my heart to send away his horse, and bid me not farewell when welcome had scarce been spoken. On the morrow it would be a joy to me to ride forth with him, and my uncle could never chafe at a few short hours' delay.

All this poured from my lips smoothly and warmly enough, and he calmly heard me to the end; but then he solemnly declared to me that, sweet as he might deem it to have me by his side to keep him company, it might not be; and he set forth clearly and fully how he had ordered the matter yestereve, and I looked up at him as to a general who foresees and governs all that may befall, to the wisest ends. So steadfast and clear a purpose I had never met; howbeit, Mother Eve's part in me was ill-content. It was too much for

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me to suffer that he should depart, and, like the fool that I was, the desire possessed me to bend to my will this man of all men, whose stiff-necked will was ever as firm as iron.

I began once more to beseech him, and this time he broke in, declaring that, say what I would, he must depart, and therewith he pulled the hood of his cloak over his head so that his well-favored, honest brown face, with its pointed beard, framed as it were in the green cloth, looked down on me, the very image of manly beauty and mild gravity.

My heart beat higher than ever for joy and pride at calling the heart of such a man mine own, and therewith my desire waxed stronger to exert my power. And I knew right well how to get the upper-hand of my lovers. My Hans had never said me nay when I had entreated him with certain wiles. And whereas I had in no wise forgotten my tricks, I took Götz by the hem of his hood and drew his dear head down to my face. Then I rubbed my nose against his as hares do when they sniff at each other, put up my lips for a kiss, stood on tip-toe, offered him my lips from afar, and whispered to him right sweetly and beseechingly: "And, in spite of all, now you are to be my good, dear heart's treasure, and will do Margery's bidding when she entreats you so fondly and will give you a sweet kiss for your pains."

But I had reckoned vainly. The reward for which my Hans modestly served me, this bold warrior cared not to win. His bearded lips, to be sure, were ready

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enough to meet mine, nor was he content with one kiss only; but, as soon as he had enjoyed the last, he took both my hands tight in his own, and said solemnly but sweetly:

"Do you not love me, Margery?" And when I had hastily declared that I did, he went on in the same tone, and still holding my hands: "Then you must know, once for all, that I could refuse you nought, neither in great matters nor small, unless it were needful. Yet, when once I have said;" and he spoke loud, "nothing can move me in the very least. You have known me from a child, and of your own free will you have given yourself over to this iron brain. Now, kiss me once more, and bear me no malice! Till to-morrow. Out in the forest, please God, we will belong to each other for many a long day!"

Therewith he clasped me firmly and truly in his arms, and I willingly and hotly returned his kiss, and or ever I could find a word to reply he had quitted the chamber. I hastened to the window, and as he waved his hand and rode off down the street facing the snow-storm, I pressed my hand to my breast, and rarely has a human being so overflowed with pure gladness at being twice worsted in the fray, albeit I had forced it on myself.

How I returned home I know not; but I know that I had rarely knelt at my prayers with such fervent thanksgiving, and that meseemed as though my mother in Heaven and my dead Hans likewise must rejoice at this which had befallen me.

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As I lay in bed, or ever I slept, all that was fairest in my past life came back to me as clearly as if it were living truth, and first and chiefest I saw myself as little Red-riding-hood, under the forest-trees with Götz, who did me a thousand services and preferred me above all others till, for Gertrude's sake, he departed beyond seas, and set my childish soul in a turmoil.

Then came the joy and the pain I had had by reason of the loves of Herdegen and Ann, and then my Hans crossed my path, and how glad I was to remember him and the bliss he had brought me! But or ever I had come to the bitterest hour of my young days, sleep overcame me, and the manly form of Götz, steeled by much peril and strife for his life, came to me in my dreams; and he did not, as Hans would have done, give me his hand; Oh no! He snatched me up in his arms and carried me, as Saint Christopher bears the Holy Child, and strode forward with a firm step over plains and abysses, whithersoever he desired; and I suffered him to go as he would, and made no resistance, and felt scarce a fear, albeit meseemed the strong grip of his iron arm hurt me. And thus we went on and on, through ancient mountain-forests, while the boughs lashed my face and I could look into the nests of the eagles and wood-pigeons, of the starlings and squirrels. It was a wondrous ramble; now and then I gasped for breath, yet on we went till, on the topmost bough of an oak, behold, there was Lorenz Abenberger, and the evil words he spoke made me wake up.

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After this I could sleep no more, and in thought I followed Götz through the snow-storm. And in spirit I saw Waldtrud, the fair daughter of Grubner, the chief forester, bidding him welcome, and giving him hot spiced wine after his cold ride, and sipping the cup with her rosy lips. Hereupon a pang pierced my heart, and methought indeed how well favored a maid was the forester's daughter, and not more than a year older than I, and by every right deemed the fairest in all the forest. And the evil fiend Jealousy, which of yore had had so little hold over me that I could bear to see my Hans pay the friendliest court to the fairest maidens, now whispered wild suspicions in mine ear that Götz, with his bold warrior's ways, might be like enough to sue for some light love-tokens from the fair and mirthful Waldtrud.

Howbeit, I presently called to mind the honest eyes of my new heart's beloved, and that brought me peace; and how I was struck with horror to think that I had known the sting of that serpent whom men call Jealousy. Must it ever creep in where true love hath found a nest? And if indeed it were so, then — and a hot glow thrilled through me — then the love which had bound me to Hans Haller had been a poor manner of thing, and not the real true passion.

No, no! Albeit it had worn another aspect than this brand new flame, which I now felt burning and blazing up from the early-lighted and long smouldering fire, nevertheless it had been of the best, and faithful and true. Albeit as the betrothed of Hans Haller I had

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been spared the pangs of jealousy, I owed it only to the great and steadfast trust I had gladly placed in him. And Götz, who had endured so much anguish and toil to be faithful to his other sweetheart, was not less worthy of my faith, and it must be my task to fight against the evil spirit with all the strength that was in me.

Then again I fell asleep; and when, as day was breaking, I woke once more and remembered all that had befallen me yestereve, I had to clutch my shoulders and temples or ever I was certain that indeed my eyes were open on another day. And what a day! My heart overflowed as I saw, look which way I might, no perils, none, nothing, verily nothing that was not well-ordered and brought to a good end, nothing that was not a certainty, and such a blessed certainty!

I rose as fresh and thankful as the lark, my Cousin Maud was standing, as yet not dressed and with screws of paper in her hair, in front of the pictures of my parents, casting a light on their faces from her little lamp; and it was plain that she was telling them, albeit without speech, that her life's labor and care had come to a happy issue, and I was irresistibly moved to fly to her brave and faithful heart; and although, while we held each other in an embrace, we found no words, we each knew full well what the other meant.

After this, in all haste we made ready to set forth, and the *Magister* came down to us in the hall, inasmuch as my cousin had called him. He made his appearance in the motley morning gabardine which

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gave him so strange an aspect, and to my greeting of: "God be with 'ee!" he gaily replied that he deemed it wasted pains to ask after my health.

Then, when he had been told all, at first he could not refrain himself and good wishes flowed from his lips as honey from the honey-comb; and he was indeed a right merry sight as, in the joy of his heart, he clapped his arms together across his breast, as a wood-hewer may, to warm his hands in winter. On a sudden, however, he looked mighty solemn, and when Cousin Maud, bethinking her of Ann, spoke kindly to him, saying that matters were so in this world, that one who stood in the sun must need cast a shadow on other folks, the *Magister* bowed his head sadly and cried: "A wise saying, worthy Mistress Maud; and he who casts the shade commonly does so against his will, *sine ira et studio*. And from that saying we may learn — suffer me the syllogism — that, inasmuch as all things which bring woe to one bring joy to another, and *vice-versa*, there must ever be some sad faces so long as there is no lack of happy ones. As to mine own poor countenance, I may number it indeed with those in shadow — notwithstanding" — here his flow of words stopped on a sudden. Howbeit, or ever we could stay him, he went on in a loud and well-nigh triumphant voice. "Notwithstanding I am no wise woeful — no, not in the least degree. I have found the clue, and who indeed could fail to see it: Your shadow can fall so black on me only by reason that you stand in the fullest sunshine! As for me, it is no hard matter for

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me to endure the blackness of night; and may you, Mistress Margery, for ever and ever stand in the glory of light, henceforth till your life's end."

As he spoke he upraised his eyes and hands to heaven as in prayer, and without bidding us "*Vale*," or "*Valete*," as was his wont, he gathered his gaudy robe and fled up-stairs again.

The storm was yet as heavy as it had been yestereve; howbeit, though *Bayard* sank into the snow so deep that I swept it with the hem of my kirtle, yet the ride to the forest-lodge meseemed was as short as though I had flown. Cousin Maud would ride slowly in the sleigh, so I suffered her to creep along, and presently outstripped her.

Götz and I had yestereve agreed that I should first see Aunt Jacoba, and then meet him at Grubner's lodge to report of what mind she might seem to be. Ann had no choice but to stay at home, inasmuch as she must be in attendance at the Cardinal's home-coming.

No one in all the dear old forest home was aware of my coming save the gate warden. My uncle had ridden forth at an early hour, and was not yet returned, but my aunt I found below stairs, strange to say, against her wont, dressed and in discourse with the chaplain. Peradventure then her husband had already made known to her what had taken him forth to Grubner's dwelling, and if so he had lifted a heavy task from me, for indeed my whole soul yearned to this dearly-beloved aunt, yet meseemed it was no light

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matter to prepare her, who was so feeble and yet so self-willed, for the joy and the strife of soul which awaited her. The board was spread for them as it were, and yet she and Götz, by their baleful oath, had barred themselves from tasting of that bread and that cup.

I crossed the threshold in trembling, and as soon as she beheld me she cried out, with burning cheeks, which glowed not so, for sure, from the blaze in the chimney: "Margery, Margery! And so happy as she looks! You have seen your uncle, child, and can tell me wherefor he is gone forth?"

I told her truly that I had not; and then bid her rejoice with me, inasmuch as that all the price of Herdegen's ransom had been paid and, best of all, that we had good tidings of our brothers' well-being.

Then she was fain to know when and through whom, and made enquiry in such wise as though she had some strong suspicion; and I answered her as calmly as I might, that a pilgrim from the East had come to us yestereve, a right loyal and worthy gentleman, whom, indeed, I hoped to bring to her knowledge.

But I might say no more by reason that her eyes on a sudden flashed up brightly, and she vehemently broke in:

"Chaplain, Chaplain! Now what do you say? When the old man rode forth so early this morning, and bid me farewell in so strange a wise, then — hear me, Margery — he likewise spoke to me of a messenger from the East who rode into the city yestereve — just

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as you say. But it was not of Herdegen that he brought tidings, but of him — of him — of Götz that he had sure knowledge. And when the old man told me so much as that, for certain somewhat lay behind it. — And now, Margery — when I see you — when I consider. . . ." Here, as I cast a meaning glance at the Chaplain, on a sudden she shrieked with such a yell as pierced my bones and marrow; and or ever I saw her, her weak, lean hand had clutched my wrist, and she cried in a hoarse voice:

"Then you, you have hid somewhat from me! The look wherewith you warned the Chaplain, oh! I marked it well. — And you hesitate — and now — you — Margery — Margery! — By Christ's wounds I ask you, Margery. What is it? — What of Götz? Has he. . . . out with it — out with the truth. . . . Has he written? — No. — You shake your head. . . . Merciful Virgin! He — he — Götz is on his way homewards." And she clapped her hands over her face. I fell on my knees by her side, dragged first her left hand and then her right hand away from her eyes, covered them with kisses, and whispered to her: "Yes, yes, Aunt, Mother, sweet, dear little mother! Only wait — You shall hear all. Götz is weary of wandering; he had not forgotten his father and mother, nor me, his little Red-riding-hood — I know it, I am sure of it. Patience! only a little patience and he will be here — in Germany, in Franconia, in Nuremberg, in the forest, in the house, in this hall, here, here where I am kneeling, at your feet, in your arms!"

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Then the deeply-moved dame, who had listened to me breathless, flung her hands high in the air as if she were seeking somewhat, and it was as though her eyes turned inside out; and I was seized with sudden terror, inasmuch as I deemed that she had drunk death out of the overfull cup of joy that my hand had put to her lips. Howbeit, it was but a brief swoon which had come upon her, and as soon as she had come to herself again and I had told her the whole truth, little by little and with due caution, even that Götz and I had found each other and both fervently and earnestly longed for her motherly blessing, she gave it me in rich abundance.

Now was it my part to make known to her that her returned son held fast to his oath; and I had already begun to tell her this when she waved her hands, and eagerly broke in: "And do you think I ever looked that he, who is a Waldstromer and a Behaim both in one, should ever break a vow? And of a truth he hath given me time enough to consider of it! — But to-day, this very day, early in the morning I found the right way out of the matter, albeit it is as like a trick of woman's craft as one egg is like another. — You know that reckless oath. It requires me never, never to bid Götz home again; but yet," — and now her eyes began to sparkle brightly with gladness — "what my oath does not forbid is that I should go forth to meet Götz, and find him wheresoever he may be."

Hereupon the Chaplain clapped his hands and cried:

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"And thus once more the love of a woman's heart hath digged a pit for Satan's craft."

And I ran forth to bid them harness the sleigh, whereas I knew full well that no counsel would avail.

And now, as of yore when she had fared into the town for love of Ann, she was wrapped in a mountain of warm garments, so we clothed her to-day in a heap of such raiment, and Young Kubbeling would suffer no man but himself to drive the horses. Thus we went at a slow pace to Grubner's lodge, and all the way we rode we met not a soul save Cousin Maud, and she only nodded to me, by reason that she could not guess that a living human creature was breathing beneath the furs and coverlets at my side. Young Kubbeling on the box, and the ravens and tomtits and redbreasts in the woods had not many words from us. While I was thinking with fear and expectation of the outcome of this meeting of the mother and son, I scarce spoke more than a kind word of good cheer now and again to my aunt, to which Kubbeling would ever add in a low voice: "All will come right!" or "God bless thee, most noble lady!" And each time we thus spoke I was aware of a small movement about my knees, and would then press my lips to the outermost cover of the beloved bundle by my side.

At about two hundred paces from the Forester's hut the path turned off from the highway, so that we might be seen from the windows thereof; and scarce had the sleigh turned into this cross-road, when the

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door of the lodge was opened and my uncle and Götz came forth.

The son had his arm laid on his father's shoulder and they gazed at us. And indeed it was a noble and joyful sight as they stood there, the old man and the young one, both of powerful and stalwart build, both grown strong in wind and weather, and true and trustworthy men. The slim young pine had indeed somewhat overtopped the gnarled oak, but the crown of the older tree was the broader. Such as the young man was now the old man must have been, and what the son should one day be might be seen — and I rejoiced to think it — in his father's figure and face. Howbeit, as a husband Götz gave no promise of treading in his father's footsteps, and when I thought of this, and of the lesson I had yestereve received, my cheeks grew redder than they had already turned in the sharp December air, or under the gaze of my new lover.

Howbeit I had no time for much thought; the sleigh was already at the door, and or ever I was aware the old man had me in his arms and kissed my lips and brow, and called me his dear and well-beloved daughter. Then the younger man pressed forward to assert his claims, and when he bent over me I threw my arms round his neck, and he lifted me up, for all that I was none of the lightest in my winter furs and thick raiment, out of the sleigh like a child, and again his lips were on mine. But we might not suffer them to meet for more than a brief kiss. Uncle Conrad had discovered my aunt's face among all her wrappings,

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and gave loud utterance to his well-founded horror, while my aunt cried out to her long-lost son by name again and again, with all the love of a longing and long-robbed mother's heart.

I gladly set my lover free, and at the next minute he was on his knees in the snow and his trembling hands removed wrap after wrap from the beloved head, Kubbeling helping him from the driving-seat with his great hands, purpled by the cold.

And again in a few minutes the mother was covering her only son's head with tender kisses, so violently and so long that her strength failed her and she fell back on the pillows, overdone.

Hereupon Götz bowed over her, and as he had erewhile lifted his sweetheart out of the sleigh, so now he lifted his mother; and while he held her thus in his arms and bore her into the house, not heeding the kerchiefs which dropped off by degrees and lay in a long line covering the ground behind her, as coals do which are carried in a broken scuttle, she cried in a trembling voice: "Oh you bad, only boy, you my darling and heart-breaker, you noble, wicked, perverse fellow! Götz my son, my own and my All!"

And when she had found a place in the warm room, in the head forester's wife's arm-chair by the fire, I removed her needless raiment and Götz sank down at her feet, and she took his head in her hands, and cried:

"I did not wait for you to come, but flew to meet you, my lad, by reason that, as you know — I took a

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sinful oath never to bid you to come home. But oath and vow are nought; they are null and void! I have learned from the depths of my heart that Heaven had nought to do with them — that it was pure pride and folly; and I bid you home with my whole heart and soul, and beseech your forgiveness for all the sorrow we have brought upon each other, and I will have and keep you henceforth, and nought else here on earth! Ah, and Gertrude, poor maid! She would have been heartily, entirely welcome to me as at this day, were it not that there is another maiden who is dearest to my heart of all the damsels on earth!"

Then was there heartfelt embracing and kissing on both parts, and, as I saw her weep, I made an unspoken vow that if the eyes of this mother and her son should ever shed tears again I would be the last to cause them, and that I would ever be ready and at hand to dry them carefully away.

I mind me likewise that I then beheld fair Waldtrud, the forester's daughter, inasmuch as she full heartily wished me joy; yet I remember even better that I felt no pang of jealousy, and indeed scarce looked at the wench, by reason that there were many other matters of which the sight gave me far greater joy.

It was a delightful and never-to-be-forgotten hour, albeit over-short; by my uncle's desire we ere long made ready to go homewards. Now when Götz was carrying his mother from the hot chamber to the sleigh, and I was left looking about me for certain kerchiefs

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of my aunt's, I perceived, squatted behind the great green-tiled stove, Young Kubbeling in a heap, and with his face hidden in his hands. He moved not till I spoke to him; then he dried his wet eyes with his fur hood, and when I laid my hand on his shoulder he drew a deep breath, and said:

"It has been a moving morning, Mistress Margery. But it will all come right. It has come upon me as a sharp blow to be sure; and I have no longer any business here in the forest, all the more so by reason that I have children and grandchildren at home who have looked over-long for the old man's home-coming. I will set forth to-morrow early. To tell the truth to none but you, I cannot endure to be away from the old place a longer space than it takes to go to Alexandria and back. My old heart is grown over-soft and weary for an absence of two journeys. And yet another matter for your ear alone: You will be the wife of a noble-hearted man, but mind you, he has long been free to wander whithersoever he would. Take it to heart that you make his home dear and happy, else it will be with you as it is with my old woman, who hath never mastered that matter, and who lives alone for more days in the year than ever we dreamed the morning we were wed."

Hereupon we went forth together; and I took his counsel to heart, and Götz never left me for any long space of time, save when he must.

As for Kubbeling, he kept his word and departed from us on the morrow morning; yet we often saw him

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again after that time, and the finest falcon in our mews is that he sent us as a wedding gift; and after our marriage Ann received a fine colored parrot as a gift from old Uhlwurm, and the old man had made it speak for her in such wise that it could say right plainly: "Uhlwurm is Ann's humble servant."

We now spent two days at the forest lodge in bliss, as though paradise had come down on earth; and albeit it is a perilous thing to rejoice in the love of a man who has wandered far beyond seas, yet has it this good side: that many matters which to another seem far away and out of reach, he deems near at hand, and half the world is his as it were. And how well could Götz make me to feel as though I shared his possession!

On the morning of the third day after his coming, my lord Cardinal rode forth to the forest with Ann; and, inasmuch as the duties of his office now led him to sojourn in Würzberg and Bamberg, he could promise us that he would bless our union or ever he departed to Italy. Albeit methought it would be a happy chance if we might stand at the altar at the same time with Herdegen and Ann, Götz's impatience, which had waxed no lesser even during his journeyings, was set against our waiting for my brother's coming. Likewise he desired that we might live together a space as man and wife, before he should go to Venice to get his release from the service of the Republic.

At the same time he deemed it not prudent to take me with him on that journey; howbeit, after that

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we were wed, when he was about to depart, I made so bold as to beseech him; and he plainly showed me that I had not made him wroth or troubled him whereas he willingly granted me to journey with him, and without reproof. Thus I fared with him to the great and mighty city of Saint Mark, which I had ever longed to behold with my bodily eyes.. I never went beyond seas, yet we journeyed as far as Rome, and there, under the protection and guidance of my lord Cardinal, I spent many never-to-be-forgotten days by the side of my Götz.

But one thing at a time; some day, if my many years may suffer, I will write more concerning these matters.

How well my aunt and the Cardinal were minded towards each other would be hard to describe, albeit now and again they fell to friendly strife; the reverend prelate found it hard to depart from the lodge and from that strange woman, whose clear and busy brain in her sickly body came, in after times, to be accounted as one of the great marvels of her native town. Howbeit, it was his duty to pass Christmas-eve with his venerable mother. He plighted Götz and me as he had promised us, and to his life's end he was ever a kind and honored friend and *patron* to us and to our children.

Ann was ever his favorite, and ere he quitted Nuremberg, he bestowed on her a dowry such as few indeed of our richest nobles could give with their daughters.

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Christmas-eve, which we spent at the lodge with our parents and the Chaplain and my dear godfather, uncle Christian Pfinzing, was a right glorious festival, bringing gladness to our souls; yet was it to end with the first peril that befell our love's young joy. After the others had gone to their chambers, and Götz had indeed given me a last parting kiss, he stayed me a moment and besought me to be ready early in the morning to ride with him to the hut of Martin the bee-keeper, whose wife had been his nurse. On many a Christmas morning had he greeted the good woman with some little posy, and now he had not found one hour to spare her since his home-coming. Now I would fain have granted this simple request but that I had privily, with the Chaplain's help, made the school children to learn a Christmas carol wherewith to wake the parents and Götz from their slumbers. Thus, when he bid me hold myself in readiness at an early hour, I besought him to make it later. This, however, by no means pleased him; he answered that the good dame was wont of old to look for him full early on Christmas morning, and he had already too long deferred his greeting. Yet the surprise I had plotted was uppermost in my mind, and I craved of him right duteously that he would grant me my will. Whereupon his eyebrows, which met above his nose, were darkly knit, and he gave me to wit, shortly and well-nigh harshly, that he would abide by his own.

At this the blood rose to my head, and a wrathful answer was indeed on my tongue when I minded me

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of the evening when we had come together, and I asked of him calmly whether he verily deemed that I was so foolish or evil-minded as to hinder him in a pious and kindly office if I had not some worthy reason. And herein I had hit on the right way; he recovered himself, his brow cleared, and saying only: "Women, women!" he shook his head and clasped me to him; and as I fervently returned his kiss, and opened my chamber door, he called after me: "We will see in the morning, but as early as may be."

When I presently was in my bed I minded me of the carol the little ones were to sing; and then I remembered my own school-days, and how the Carthusian Sisters had explained to us those words of Scripture: "And the times shall be fulfilled." They were written, to be sure, of a special matter, of the birth of our Saviour and Redeemer; yet I applied them to myself and Götz, and wondered in my heart whether indeed anything that had ever befallen me in life, whether for joy or for sorrow, had been in vain, and how matters might have stood with me now if, as a young unbroken thing, or ever I had gone through the school of life, I had been plighted to this man, whom the Almighty had from the first fated to be my husband. If the wilful blood of the Schoppers, unquelled as it had then been, had come into strife with Götz's iron will, there would have been more than enough of hard hitting on both sides, and how easily might all our happiness have been wrecked thereby.

It was past midnight when at last I slept; and in

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the dim morning twilight the Christmas chorus rang through the house in the words the Shepherds heard in Angels' voices: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." It woke Götz, and when we presently got into the sleigh, he whispered to me: "How piously glad was your hymn, my sweetheart! And you were right yestereve, and peace shall indeed reign on earth, and above all betwixt you and me, everywhere and at all times till the E N D."

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A *Postscriptum* BY KUNZ SCHOPPER.

THE children entreat me to write more of Margery's unfinished tale. Howbeit I am nigh upon eighty years of age, and how may I hope to win favor in the exercise of an act to which I am unskilled save in matters of business? Yet, whereas I could never endure to say nay to any reasonable prayer of those who are dearest to my heart, I will fulfil their desire, only setting down that which is needful, and in the plainest words.

They at whose bidding I sit here, all knew my dear sister well. Margery, the widow of the late departed Forest-ranger, the Knight Sir Götz Waldstromer, Councillor to his Imperial Majesty and Captain of the men-at-arms in our good city; and each profited during a longer or shorter space by her loving-kindness, and her wise and faithful counsel.

Many of them can likewise remember the late Anna Spiesz, sometime wife of Herdegen Schopper; and as to the said Herdegen Schopper, my dear brother, Margery's book of *memorabilia* right truly shows forth the manner of his life and mind in the bloom of his youth,

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and verily it is a sorrowful task for me to set forth the decay and end of so noble a man.

As to myself, the last remaining link of the Schopper chain whereof Margery hath many times made mention, I am still with you, my dear ones; and I remain but little changed, inasmuch as that my life has ever flowed calmly and silently onward.

How it came to pass that Margery should so suddenly have brought her memories to an end most of you know already; howbeit I will set it down for the younger ones.

Till she reached the age of sixty and seven years, she never rode in a litter, but ever made her journeyings on horseback. For many years past she and her husband abode in the forest during the summer months only, and dwelt in their town-house the winter through. Now on a day, when in her written tale she had got as far as the time when she and Götz, her dear husband, were wed, she besought him to ride forth with her to the forest, inasmuch as that she yearned once more to see the spot in the winter season which had seen the happiest days of her life in that long-past December. Thus they fared forth on horseback, although it was nigh on Christmas-tide, and when they waved their hands to me as they passed me by in sheer high spirits and mirthfulness, meseemed that in all Nuremberg, nay in Franconia or in the whole German Empire a man might scarce find an old white-haired pair of lovers to match these for light-heartedness and goodly mien. Some few happy and glad days were at

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that time vouchsafed to them in the old well-known forest; but on the ride home Margery's palfrey stumbled close without the city gates on the frozen ground. Her arm-bone was badly broken and her right hand remained so stiff, notwithstanding Master Hartmann Knorr's best skill, that she could no more use the pen save with great pain, albeit she often after this rode on horseback. Thus the little book lay aside for a long space; and while she was yet diligently striving to write with her left hand death snatched from her Ann Schopper, the widow of our late dear brother Herdegen Schopper and her heart's best friend, and this fell upon her soul as so cruel a grief that she never after could endure to take up the pen.

Then, when she lost her dearly-beloved husband, a few months after their golden wedding day, all was at an end for her; the brave old woman gave up all care for life, and died no more than three months after him. And indeed often have I seen how that, when one of a pair, who have dwelt together so many years in true union of hearts, departs this life, this earth is too lonely for the other, so that one might deem that their hearts had grown to be as it were one flesh, and the one that is left hath bled to death inwardly from the Reaper's stroke.

Then I read through this book of memories once more, and meseemed that Margery had written of herself as less worthy than of a truth she was in her life's spring-tide.

Most of you can yet remember how that my lord

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the Mayor spoke of the bride with the golden chaplet crowning her thick silver hair, as the pride of our city, the best friend and even at times the wisest counsellor of our worshipful Council, the comforter and refuge of the poor; and you know full well that Master Johannes Lochner, the priest, spoke over her open grave, saying that, as in her youth she had been fairest, so in old age she was the noblest and most helpful of all the dames of the parish of Saint Sebald; and you yourselves have many a time been her almoners, or have gazed in silence to admire her portrait.

And at Venice I have heard from the lips of the very master who limned her, and who was one of the greatest painters of the famous guild to which he belonged, that such as she had he imagined the stately queen of some ancient German King defeated by the Romans, or Eve herself, if indeed one might conceive of our cold German fatherland as Paradise. Yea, the most charming and glowing woman he had ever set eyes on was your mother and grandmother.

And whensoever she went to a dance all the young masters of noble birth, and the counts and knights, yea even at the Emperor's court, were of one mind in saying that Margery Schopper was the fairest and likewise the most happy-tempered maid and most richly endowed with gifts of the mind, in all Nuremberg. None but Ann could stand beside her, and her beauty was Italian and heavenly rather than German and earthly.

Margery's *manuscript* ends where she had reached a happy haven; howbeit there were others of whom

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she makes mention who were not so happy as to cast anchor betimes, and if I am to set forth my own tale I must go back to Alexandria in the land of Egypt.

The dagger hired by Ursula to kill Herdegen struck me; howbeit, by the time when my cousin Götz brought my dear brother to see me, himself a free man, I was already healed of my wound and ready to depart. The worthy mother of Akusch had tended me with a devotion which would have done honor to a Christian woman, and it was under her roof that first I saw Herdegen and my cousin once more. And how greatly was I surprised to see Götz, taller than of old, appear before me in the magnificent array and harness of a chief captain in the army of the all-powerful Republic of Venice! Instead of an exiled adventurer I found him a stalwart gentleman, in every respect illustrious and honored, whose commanding eye showed that he was wont to be obeyed, albeit his voice and mien revealed a compassionate and friendly soul. Yea, and meseemed that at his coming a fresher, purer air blew about me; and as soon as he had made Herdegen's cause his own and stood surety for him, the chief of the great trading house of Michieli paid the ransom, which to me, knowing the value of money, must have seemed never to be compassed, unless my grand-uncle had been fain to help us. Howbeit, my cousin would not do the like service for the Knight of Welemisl, in whose mien and manners he put less trust, wherefore I became his surety, out of sheer pity and at Herdegen's prayer.

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Here you will ask of me wherefore I do not first speak of my meeting again with my dear long-suffering brother. And indeed my heart beat high with joy and thanksgiving, when we held each other clasped; but alack what changes had come over him in these years of slavery! When he came into my chamber, his head bowed and his hands behind his back, after that we had greeted I turned from him and made as though I had some matter to order, to the end that he might not see me dry my tears; inasmuch as that he who stood before me was my Herdegen indeed, and yet was not.

For eighteen long months had he plied the oars on board of a Saracen galley, while Sir Franz, who was overweak for such toil, served as keeper of slaves on the benches, himself with chains on his feet. And it was this long, hard toil which had made my brother diligently to hide his hands behind his back, as though he were ashamed of them; whereas those strong hands of his with their costly rings he had ever been wont to deem a grace, and now of a truth they were grown coarse and as red as a brick, and were like to those of a hewer in the woods. And whereas men are apt often to pay less heed to another's face than to the shape and state of his hands, I ever mind me of Herdegen's as I saw them on that day, and a star and a crescent were branded in blue on the back of his right, so that all men must see it.

Likewise his deep breast had lost some of its great strength, and he held himself less stately than of old. Meseemed as though the knight had laid some part of

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his sickness upon him, inasmuch that many a time he coughed much. Likewise the long golden hair, which had flowed in rich abundance down over his shoulders, had been shorn away after the manner of the unbelievers, and this gave to his well-favored face a narrow and right strange appearance. Only the shape of his countenance and his eyes were what they had ever been; nay, meseemed that his eyes had a brighter and moister light in them than of yore.

One thing alone was a comfort to me, and that was that my heart beat with more pitiful and faithful love for him than ever. And when evening fell, as we brethren sat together with Götz and Master Knorr and Akusch, drinking our wine, which only Akusch would not touch, this comforting assurance waxed strong within me, by reason that Herdegen's voice was as sweet as of old, both in speech and in song; and when he set forth all the adventures and sufferings he had gone through in these last past years I was fain to listen, and even so was Götz; and first he drew tears from our eyes and presently made us laugh right mirthfully. And what had he not gone through!

I betook me to bed that night in hope and contentment; howbeit, on the morrow Master Knorr told me privily that whereas my brother's lungs had never been of the strongest, if now, in the cold December season, he should fare north of the Alps after such long sojourning under a warmer sky, it could not fail to do him a serious mischief, as it likewise would to Sir Franz. Thus it must be my part to delay our home-

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coming; and albeit the leech's tidings made me heavy at heart I was fain to yield, inasmuch as that Herdegen might not appear in the presence of his sweetheart in his present guise.

To this end we made him to believe that he might not come home in safety unless he had performed the penance laid upon him by the Emperor; and albeit he felt it a hard matter to refrain the craving of his heart, nevertheless he gave way to our pressing admonitions.

Now, while Götz fared back to Venice, the galleon which carried Don Jaime, Prince of Catalonia, as far as Joppa, brought us likewise to the Promised Land and to the holy city of Jerusalem. From thence we made our pilgrimage to many other Holy Places, under the protection of the great fellowship of that royal Prince, who ever showed us much favor.

At last we journeyed homewards, passing by Naples and Genoa; at Damietta, in the land of Egypt, Sir Franz departed from our company to make his way to Venice. It was with care and grief that I saw him set forth on his way alone, and Herdegen was like-minded; in their misfortune he had learned to mark much that was good in him, and during our long journeying we had seen that not only was he sick in body, but likewise that a shroud hung over his soul and brain. Also, if Ursula were yet free to work her will, the very worst might haply befall him in Venice, by reason that the Giustinianis were of a certainty evil-disposed towards him, and the power and dignity of that family were by no means lessened, although, as at that time,

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Antonio Giustiniani had dishonored his name in Albania, and had been punished by the Forty with imprisonment and sundry penalties. Yet his cousin Orsato was one of the greatest and richest of the *signori* at Venice, and Ursula's husband would have found in him a strong upholder, as in truth we heard at Naples, where tidings reached us that the *Pregadi*, who had passed judgment upon him, had amerced him in a penalty of no more than two thousand ducats, which Orsato paid for him by reason that he would not suffer that his kinsman should lie in prison.

At Genoa we found many letters full of good tidings of our kindred at home, all overflowing with love and the hope of speedily seeing us there. Hereupon Herdegen could not refrain himself for impatience and, if I had suffered it, he would have ridden onward by day and by night with no pause nor rest, taking fresh horses as he might need them; for my part what I chiefly cared for was to bring him home as fresh and sound as I might, and so preserve Ann from grief of heart. Herdegen had given me her letters to read, and how true and deep a love, how lofty and pure a soul spoke in those lines! Howbeit, when I heard her, as it were, cry out by those letters, how that she longed for the moment when she might again stroke his flowing locks and press his dear faithful hand to her lips as his dutiful maid, my heart beat with fresh fears. He held him more upright, to be sure, and his countenance was less pale and hollow than it had been; but nevermore might he be a strong man. His

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bright eyes were deep in their sockets, his hair was rarer on his head, and there were threads of silver among the gold. Ah, and those luckless hands! It was by reason of his hands — albeit you will doubtless smile at the confession — that I moved him to refrain his longing, even when we were so near our journey's end as Augsburg, and to grant me another day's delay, inasmuch as that I cared most that he should at first hide them in gloves from the womankind at home. And in all the great town was there not a pair to be found that would fit him, and it would take a whole day to make him a pair to his measure. Thus were we fain to tarry, and whereas we had in Augsburg, among other good friends, a faithful ally in trading matters at the Venice Fondaco, Master Sigismund Gossenprot, we lodged in his dwelling, which was one of the finest in that fine city; and, as good-hap ruled it, he had, on the very eve of that day, come home from Venice.

He and his worthy wife had known Herdegen of old, and I was cut to the heart to see how the sight of him grieved them both. Nay, and the fair young daughter of the house ne'er cast an eye on the stranger guest, whose presence had been wont to stir every maiden's heart to beat faster. Howbeit, here again I found comfort when I marked at supper that the sweet damsel no longer heeded my simple person, whereas she had at first gazed at me with favor, but hearkened with glowing cheeks to Herdegen's discourse. At first, to be sure, this was anything rather than gay, inasmuch as Master Gossenprot was full of tidings from

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Venice, and of Sir Franz's latter end, which, indeed, was enough to sadden the most mirthful.

When the Bohemian had come to Venice he had lodged at a tavern, by name "*The Mirror*," and there mine host had deemed that he was but a gloomy and silent guest. And it fell that one day the city was full of a dreadful uproar, whereas it was rumored that in the afternoon, at the hour when Dame Ursula Giustiniani was wont to fare forth in her gondola, a strange man clad in black had leaped into it from his own and, before the serving-men could lay hands on him, he had stabbed her many times to the heart with his dagger. Then, as they were about to seize him, he had turned the murderous weapon still wet with his victim's blood, on himself, and thus escaped the avenging hand of justice.

As soon as the host of *The Mirror* heard this tale, he minded him of that strange, dark man and, when that way-farer came not home to his inn, he made report thereof to the judges. Then, on making search in his wallet, it was discovered that he had entered there under a false name, and that it was Sir Franz von Welemisl who had taken such terrible vengeance on Ursula for her sins against himself and Herdegen.

From Augsburg we now made good speed, and when, one fine June morning, our proud old citadel greeted our eyes from afar, and I saw that Herdegen's eyes were wet as he gazed upon it, mine eyes likewise filled with tears, and as we rode we clasped hands fervently, but in silence.

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I sent forward a messenger from our last halting-place to give tidings of our coming; and when, hard by Schweinau, behold a cloud of dust, our eyes met and told more than many and eloquent words.

Great and pure and thankful joy filled and bore up my soul; but presently the cloud of dust was hid by a turn in the road behind the trees, and even so, quoth my fearful heart, the shroud of the future hid what next might befall us.

The cruel blows of fate which had fallen on Herdegen had not been all in vain, and the growing weakness of his frame warned him not to spend his strength and eagerness on new and ever new things. Yet what troubled me was that he was not aware of the changes that had come upon him within and without. From all his speech with me I perceived that, even now, he might not conceive that life could be other than as he desired: notwithstanding it gave me secret joy to look upon this dear fellow, for whom life should have had no summer heats nor winter frosts, but only blossoming spring-tide and happy autumn days.

But now we had got round the wood, and we might see what the cloud of dust had concealed. Foremost there came a train of waggons loaded with merchandise and faring southwards, and the first waggon had met a piled-up load of charcoal coming forth from the forest at a place in the road where they were pent between a deep ditch on one hand and thick brushwood and undergrowth on the other; thus neither could turn aside, and their wheels were so fast locked

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that they barred the road as it had been a wall. Thus the second waggon likewise had come to hurt by the sudden stopping of the first, and it was but hardly saved from turning over into the ditch. There was a scene of wild turmoil. The waggons stopped the way, and neither could the rest of the train, nor their armed outriders, nor our own folks come past, by reason that the ditch was full deep and the underwood thick. We likewise were compelled to draw rein and look on while the six fine waggon horses which had but just come from the stable, their brown coats shining like mirrors, were unharnessed, and likewise the draught-oxen were taken out of the charcoal-waggon; which was done with much noise and cursing, and the brass plates that decked the leathern harness of the big horses jingling so loud and clear that we might not hear the cries of our kinsfolks. Nay, it was the plume in Götz's hat, towering above the throng, which showed us that they were come.

Now, while Herdegen was vainly urging and spurring his unwilling horse to leap down into the ditch and get round this fortress of waggons, two of the others — and I instantly saw that they were Ann and her father, on horseback — had made their way close to the charcoal waggon; howbeit, they could get no further by reason that it had lurched half over and strewed the way with black charcoal-sacks.

My heart beat as though it would crack, and lo, as I looked round to point them out to Herdegen, he had put forth his last strength to make his horse take the

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leap, and could scarce hold himself in the saddle; his anguish of mind, and the foolish struggle with the wilful horse, had exhausted the strength of his sickly frame. His face was pale and his breath came hard as he sat there, on the edge of the ditch, and held his great hand to his breast as though he were in pain. Hereupon I likewise felt a deep pang of unspeakable torment, albeit I knew from experience that for such ills there was no remedy but perfect rest. I looked away from him and beheld, a little nearer now, Ann high on her saddle, diligently waving her kerchief, and at her side her father, lifting his councillor's hat.

In a few moments we were united once more.

But no. . . .

As I wrote the foregoing words with a trembling hand I vowed that I would set down nought but the truth and the whole truth. And inasmuch as I have not shrunk from making mention of certain matters which many will deem of small honor to Herdegen, who was, by the favor of Heaven, so far more highly graced in all ways than I, who have never been other than middling gifted, it would ill-become me to shrink from relating matters whereof I myself have lived to repent.

There, by the ditch, was my dear only brother, weary and pale, a man marked for an early grave; and in front of me, within a few paces, the woman to whom my heart's only and fervent love had been given even as a child. She sat like a King's daughter on a noble white horse with rich trappings. A magnificent garment

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of fine cloth, richly broidered with Flanders velvet, flowed about her slender body. The color thereof was white and sapphire-blue, and so likewise were the velvet cap and finely-rounded ostrich feather, which was fastened into it with a brooch of sparkling precious stones. I had always deemed her fairest in sheeny white, and she knew it, while Herdegen had taken blue for his color; and behold she wore both, for love perchance of both brothers. Never had I seen her fairer than at this minute and she had likewise waxed of a buxom comeliness, and how sweet were her red cheeks, and swan-white skin, and ebony-black hair, which flowed out from beneath her little hat in long plaits twined with white and sapphire-blue velvet ribbon.

Never did a maid seem more desirable to a man. And her father on his great brown horse — he was no more a craftsman! In his councillor's robes bordered with fur, with the golden chain round his neck, his well-favored, grave, and manly countenance, and the long, flowing hair down to his shoulders, meseemed he might have been the head of some ancient and noble family. None in Nuremberg might compare with these two for manly dignity and womanly beauty, and was that sickly, bent horseman by the ditch worthy of them? "No, no," cried a voice in my heart. "Yes, yes!" cried another; and in the midst of this struggle I could but say to myself: "He has an old and good right to her, and as soon as he has found breath he will claim it."

But she? What will she do; how will she demean

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her; is she aware of his presence? Will she shrink from him as Dame Gossenprot did at Augsburg, and the inn-keeper's smart wife at Ingolstadt, who of old was so over-eager to be at his service? Would Ann, who had rejected many a lordly suitor, be as sweet as of yore to that breathless creature? And if she were to follow the example which he long since set her, if she now cut the bond which he of old had snatched asunder, or if — Merciful Virgin! — if his sickness should increase, and he himself should shrink from fettering her blooming young life to his own — then, oh, then it might be my turn, then....

And on a sudden there was a cry from the depths of my heart, but heard by none: "Look on this side. Look on me, my one and only beloved! Turn from him who once turned from thee, and hearken to Kunz who loves thee with a more faithful and fervent love than that man, who to this day knows not what thy true worth is, whose heart is as fickle as mine is honest and true. Here I stand, a strong and stalwart man, the friend of every good man, willing and able to carry you in my strong hands through a life crowned with wealth and happiness!"

And while the voice of the Evil One whispered this and much more, my gaze, meseemed, was spellbound to her countenance, and the light of her eyes from afar shone deep into mine. And on a sudden I flung up my arms and, without knowing what I did, stretched them forth, as though beside myself, towards that hotly-loved maiden. Whether she saw this or no I

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may never learn. And the grace of the Blessed Virgin or of my guardian Saint preserved me from evil and disgrace, for whereas all that was in me yearned for that beloved one, a clear voice called to me by name, and when I turned, behold it was Margery, who had leaped her light palfrey into the ditch and now had sprung up the grassy bank. It was a break-neck piece of horsemanship, to which she had been driven by longing and sisterly love; and behind her came a man, my cousin Götz, whose newly-married wife's daring leap was indeed after his own heart. One more plunge, and their horses were on the high-road, and I had lifted Margery out of her saddle and we held each other clasped, stammering out foolish disconnected words, while we first laughed and then wept.

This went on for some while till I was startled by an outcry, and behold, Eppelein, in his impatience to greet his dear master, had been fain to do as Margery and Götz had done, but with less good fortune, inasmuch as that he had fallen under his horse, which had rolled over with him. His lamentable outcry told me that he needed help, and once more in my life I fulfilled my strange fate, which has ever been to cast to the winds that for which my soul most longed, for another to take it up. While Margery turned to greet Herdegen I hastened down the bank to rescue the faithful fellow who had endured so much in my brother's service, ere the worst should befall him.

And this, with no small pains, I was able to do;

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and when I was aware that he had suffered no mortal hurt, I clambered up on to the road again, and then once more my heart began to beat sadly. Ann and Herdegen had met again, and once for all. How was she able to refrain herself as she beheld the changed countenance of her lover, and to be mistress of her horror and dismay?

Now, when I had climbed the bank with some pains, in my heavy riding-boots, I saw that the waggon-men had harnessed the six brown horses to their cart once more, and behind them, on the skirt of the wood, were the pair that I sought; and as I went nearer to them Ann had drawn the glove, for which we had tarried so long in Augsburg, from off her lover's battered right hand, and was gazing at it lovingly, with no sign of horror, but with tears in her eyes; and she cried as she kissed it again and again: "Oh, that poor, dear, beloved hand, how cruelly it has suffered, how hard it must have toiled! And that? That is where the blue brand-mark was set? But it is almost gone. And it is in my color, blue, our favorite sapphire-blue!" And she pointed joyously to her goodly array, and she confessed that it was for him alone, that he might see from afar how well she loved and honored him, that she had arrayed herself in the color of fidelity in which he had ever best loved to see her. And he clasped her to him, and when she kissed his thin, streaked hair, and spoke of those dear flowing curls, to which love and care would restore their beauty, I swore a solemn vow before God that I would never

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look on the union of Herdegen and Ann but with thanksgiving and without envy, and ever do all that in me lay for those two and for their welfare.

Of the glad meeting with our other kith and kin I will say nought. As to Cousin Maud, she had remained at home to welcome her darling at the gate of the Schopperhof, which she had decked forth bravely. Yea, her warm heart beat more fondly for him than for us. She could not wholly conceal her dismay at seeing him so changed. She would stroke him from time to time with a cherishing hand, yet she went about him as though there were somewhat in him of which she was afeard.

Howbeit, in the evening it was with her as it had been with me in the land of Egypt, and she found him again for whom her heart yearned so faithfully. Now, that which had seemed lacking came to light once more, and from that hour she no longer grieved for what he had lost and which a true mother peradventure might never have missed; indeed as his bodily health failed, and she shared the care of tending him with Ann, none could have conceived that he was not verily and indeed her own son.

The evil monster which had crept into my brother's breast grew, thank Heaven, but slowly; and when the young pair had been wed, with a right splendid feast, and my brother had taken Ann home to the Schoppers' house as his dear wife, a glad hope rose up in me that Master Knorr had taken an over-gloomy view of the matter, and that Herdegen might blossom again into

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new strength and his old hearty health. Howbeit it was but his heart's gladness which lent him so brave and glad an aspect; the sickness must have its course, and it was as it were a serpent, gnawing silently at my joy in life, and its bite was all the more cruel by reason that I might tell no man what it was that hurt me save the old Waldstromers. But they likewise grew young again after their son's homecoming, and notwithstanding her feeble frame, Aunt Jacoba saw Margery's eldest son grow to be six years of age. And she sent him his packet of sweetmeats the first day he went to school; but when the little lad went to thank his grandmother, the old dame was gone to her rest; and her husband lived after her no more than a few months.

One grief only had darkened the latter days of this venerable pair, in truth it was a heavy one; it was the death of my dear brother Herdegen, which befell at the end of the fifth year after he was happily married.

At the end of the fourth year his sickness came upon him with more violence, yet he went forth and back, and ever hoped to be healed, even when he took to his bed four weeks before the end.

On the very last day, on a certain fine evening in May, it was that he said to Ann: "Hearken, my treasure, I am surely better! On the day after to-morrow we will go forth into the sweet Spring, to hear Dame Nightingale who is singing already, and to see Margery. Oh, out in the forest breezes blow to heal the sick!"

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Yet they went not; two hours later he had departed this life. By ill fortune at that very time I was at Venice on a matter of business, and when the tidings came to me that my only beloved brother was dead, meseemed as though half my being were torn away, aye, and the nobler and better half; that part which was not content to grieve and care for none but earthly estate and for all that cometh up and passeth away here below, but which hath a position in the bliss of another world, where we ask not only of what use and to what end this or that may be, as I have ever done in my narrow soul.

When Herdegen's eyes closed in death, my wings were broken as it were; with him I lost the highest aim and end of all my labors. For five hard years had I toiled and struggled, often turning night into day, and not for myself, but for him and his, ever upheld and sped forward by the sight of his high soul and great happiness. Our grand-uncle Im Hoff had left me his house and the conduct of his trade, as you have learned already from Margery's little book; and during my long journeyings many matters had not been done to my contentment, and the sick old man had taken out overmuch moneys from the business. A goodly sum came to us from our parents' estate, and my brother and sister and Cousin Maud were fain to entrust me with theirs; but how much I had to do in return!

Moreover a great care came upon me from without, by reason that Sir Franz's kin and heirs refused to repay the moneys for the ransom which Master Mich-

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ieli of Venice had laid down, and for which Herdegen and I had been sureties. Albeit in this matter we had applied to the law, we might not suffer Michieli to come to loss by reason of his generosity, so I took upon me the whole debt, and that was a hard matter in those times and in my case; and the fifteen thousand ducats which were repaid me by judgment of law, thirty years afterwards, made me small amends, inasmuch as by that time I had long been wont to reckon with much greater sums.

I made good my friend's payment of Herdegen's ransom to the last farthing; yet what pressed me most hardly, so long as my brother lived, was his housekeeping; few indeed in Nuremberg could have spent more.

My eldest brother was the only one of us three who might keep any remembrance of our father, whose trade with Venice and Flanders had yielded great profits, and he could yet mind him how full the house had ever been of guests, and the stables of horses. Now, therefor, he was fain to live on the same wise, and this he deemed was right and seemly, inasmuch as he took the moneys which I gave him as half the clear profits of the Im Hoff trade, which were his by right. And I was fain to suffer him to enjoy that belief, albeit at that time concerns looked but badly. It was I, not he, whose part it was to care for those concerns; and I rejoiced with all my heart when he and his lovely young wife rode forth in such bravery, when he sat as host at the head of a table

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well-furnished with guests, and won all hearts by his lofty and fiery spirit, which conquered even the least well-disposed. Yet was it not easy to supply that which was needed, or to refrain from speech or reproof when, for instance, my brother must need have from the land of Egypt for Ann such another noble horse as the Emirs there are wont to ride. Or could I require him to pay when, after that Heaven had blessed him with a first born child, Herdegen, radiant with pride and joy, showed me a cradle all of ivory overlaid with costly carved work which he had commanded to be wrought for his darling by the most skilled master known far and wide, for a sum which at that time would have purchased a small house? Albeit it was nigh upon quarter day, I would have taken this and much more upon me rather than have quenched his heart's great gladness; and when I saw thee, Margery the younger, who art now thyself a grandmother, sleeping like a king's daughter in that precious cradle, and perceived with how great joy it filled thy parents to have their jewel in so costly a bed, I rejoiced over my own patience.

It did my heart good, though I spoke not, to hear the Schoppers' house praised as the friendliest in all Nuremberg; yet at other times meseemed I saw shame and poverty standing at the door; and whereas, indeed, those years of magnificence, which for sure were the hardest in all my life, came to no evil issue, I owe this, next to Heaven's grace, to the trust which many folks in Nuremberg placed in my honesty and judg-

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ment, far beyond my desert. And when once, not long before my brother's over-early death, I found myself to the very brow in water, as it were, it was that faithfulest of all faithful friends, Uncle Christian Pfinzing, who read the care in my eyes and face during the very last great banquet at Herdegen's table, and led me into the oriel bay, and offered me all his substance; and this was a goodly sum indeed and saved my trade from shipwreck.

Next to him it is Cousin Maud that we three links of the Schopper chain ought ever to hold dearest in memory; and it was by a strange chance that he and she died, not only on the same day, but, as it were, of the same death. Death came upon him at the Schoppers' table with the cup in his hand, after that Ann, his "watchman" had warned him to be temperate; and this was three years after her husband's death. And Cousin Maud, as she came forth from the kitchen, whither she had gone to heat her famous spiced wine for Uncle Christian, who was already gone, fell dead into Margery's arms when she heard the tidings of his sudden end.

Among the sundry matters which long dwelt in the minds both of Margery and Ann, and were handed down to their grandchildren, were the *Magister's* Latin verses in their praise. It is but a few years since Master Peter Piehringer departed this life at a great age, and when Götz's boys went through their schooling so fast and so well they owed it to his care and learning. But chiefly he devoted himself to Ann's daugh-

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ters, Margery and Agnes, and indeed it is ever so that our heart goeth forth with a love like to that for our own sons or daughters to the offspring of the woman we have loved, even when she has never been our own.

Eppelein Göckel, my brother's faithful serving-man, was wed to Aunt Jacoba's tiring-woman. After his master's death I made him to be host in the tavern of "The Blue Sky," and whereas his wife was an active soul, and his tales of the strange adventures he had known among the Godless heathen brought much custom to his little tavern parlor, he throve to be a man of great girth and presence.

By the seventh year after our home-coming my hardest cares for the concerns of my trade were overpast, albeit I must even yet keep my eyes open and give brain and body no rest. Half my life I spent in journeying, and whereas I perceived that it was only by opening up other branches of trade that I might fulfil the many claims which ever beset me, I set myself to consider the matter; and inasmuch as that I had seen in the house of Akusch how gladly the women of Egypt would buy hazel-nuts from our country, I began to deal in this humble merchandise in large measure; and at this day I send more than ten thousand sequins' worth of such wares, every year, by ship to the Levant. Likewise I made the furs of North Germany and the toys of Nuremberg a part of my trade, which in my uncle's life-time had been only in spices and woven goods. And so, little by little, my

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profits grew to a goodly sum, and by God's favor our house enjoyed higher respect than it ever had had of old.

And it is a matter of rejoicing to me that at this time there is again an Im Hoff at its head with me, so that the old name shall be handed down; Ann's oldest daughter, Margery Schopper, having married one Berthold Im Hoff, who is now my worthy partner.

The sons of the elder Margery, the young Waldstromers, had much in them of the hasty Schopper temper, and a voice for song; and all three have done well, each in his way. Herdegen is now the Hereditary Ranger, and held in no less honor than Kunz Waldstromer, my beloved godson, who is a man of law in the service of our good town. Franz, who dedicated himself to the Church at an early age, under the protection of my lord Cardinal Bernhardi, has already been named to be the next in office after our present aged and weakly Bishop.

The son of Agnes, Herdegen's younger daughter, is Martin Behaim, a high-spirited youth in whom his grandfather's fiery and restless temper lives again, albeit somewhat quelled.

And if you now enquire of me how it is that I, albeit my heart beats warmly enough for our good town and its welfare and honor, have only taken a passing part in the duties of its worshipful Council, this is my answer: Inasmuch as to provide for the increase of riches for the Schopper family took all the strength I had, I lacked time to serve the commonwealth as my

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heart would have desired; and by the time when my dear nephew Berthold Im Hoff came to share the conduct of the trade with me I was right willing to withdraw behind my young partner, Ann's son-in-law, and to take his place in the business, while he and Kunz Waldstromer were chosen to high dignity on the Council. Nevertheless it is well-known that I have given up to the town a larger measure of time and labor and moneys than many a town-mayor and captain of watch. Of this I make mention to the end that those who come after me shall not charge me with evil self-seeking.

Likewise some may ask me wherefor I, the last male offspring of the old Schopper race, have gone through life unwed. Yet of a certainty they may spare me the answer to whom I have honestly confessed all my heart's pangs at the meeting of Herdegen with Ann.

After the death of her best-beloved lord the young widow was overcome with brooding melancholy from which nothing could rouse her. At that time you, my Margery and Agnes, her daughters, clung to me as to your own father; and when, at the end of three years, your mother was healed of that melancholy, it had come about that you had learned to call me father while I had sported with you and loved you in "your" mother's stead, and taught you to fold your little hands in prayer and led you out for air walking by your side. Your mother had heeded it not; but then, when she bloomed forth in new and wondrous beauty,

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and I beheld that Hans Koler and the Knight Sir Henning von Beust, who had likewise remained unwed, were again her suitors, the old love woke up in my heart; and one fair May evening, out in the forest, the question rose to my lips whether she could not grant me the right to call you indeed my children before all the world, and her. . . .

But to what end touch the wound which to this day is scarce healed?

In this world and the next she would never be any man's but his to whom her heart's great and only love had been given. But from that evening forth I, the rejected suitor, must suffer that you children should no longer call me father, but Uncle Kunz; and when afterwards it came to be dear little uncle you may believe that I was thankful. She no less rejected the suit of Koler and of von Beust; but the last-named gentleman made up for his dismissal by marrying a noble damsel of Brandenburg. At a later time when he came to Nuremberg he was made welcome by Margery, and then, meeting with Ann once more, he showed himself to be still so youthful and duteous in his service to her, in despite of her grey hairs, that for certain it was well for his happiness at home that he should have come without his wife.

Not long after Ann's rejection I confessed to Margery what had befallen, and when she heard it, she cast her arms about my neck and cried: "Why, ne'er content, must you crave a new home and family? Are not two warm hearths yours to sit at, and the love and

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care of two faithful house-wives; and are you not the father and counsellor, not alone of your nephews and nieces, but of their parents likewise?" All this she said in an overflow of sisterly love; and if it comforted me, as I here make record of it, by reason that I sorely needed such good words, if I here recall how sad life often seemed to me.

Nay, nay! It was sweet, heavenly sweet, and worthy of all thanksgiving that I, who of the three Schopper links was so far the most humbly gifted, was suffered by Fate to be of some use to the other two, and even to their children and grandchildren, and to help in adding to their well-being. In this — insomuch I may say with pride — in this I have had all good-speed; thus my life's labor has not been in vain, and I may call my lot a happy one. And thus I likewise have proved the truth of old Adam Heyden's saying, that he who does most for other folks at the same time does the best for himself.

THE END.

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